

THE LIBERTY BOYS OF '76

A Weekly Magazine containing Stories of the American Revolution.

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OR, SET BACK, BUT NOT DEFEATED.

By HARRY MOORE.



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CHAPTER I.

THE CONCEALED MARKSMAN.

"Will ye take ther oath uv alleegance ter the British cause?"

"No."

"Take et er die!"

"I will die if need be, but take the oath of allegiance to the tyrant king I will not!"

"Ye hed better."

"No!"

It was rather an exciting scene.

Standing underneath the spreading branches of a giant tree which stood beside the road in front of a house a few miles from Charleston, South Carolina, was a man who, while roughly dressed, after the fashion of the farmers of the region, was a brave and rather handsome man. Around his neck was a rope; the rope was thrown over a limb ten feet above his head, and the end was held by half a dozen rough-looking men. In front of the threatened man stood four or five more rough-looking men, and it was one of these that had addressed the words to the prisoner, for such he evidently was.

Standing near, with clasped hands and tears coursing down their cheeks, were a woman of forty years and a beautiful maiden of seventeen or eighteen years.

The time of the occurrence of this scene was midsummer of the year 1779, and the Revolutionary War was in progress.

The ten or a dozen rough-looking men were Tories, the single man was a Whig, or patriot. A short time before our story opens the Tories had called at the house, which stood a little ways back from the road, had called the farmer, David Boggs, to the door, had made him a prisoner, led him out, placed the rope around his neck, and demanded that he take the oath of allegiance to the king. The farmer was a brave man, however, and he promptly refused, whereupon ensued the conversation above given.

"Ye air er fool, Dave Boggs," growled the leader of the party of Tories.

"I don't think so," was the quiet reply.

"Wal, I do. Enny man's er fool whut'll let 'imself be hung rather than take ther oath uv alleegance ter ther king."

"You may think so, but I do not."

"I know et's so."

"You don't know it. That is just your opinion, that is all."

"Wal, thet's neether heer nur theer. Air ye goin' ter take ther oath?"

"I have already told you that I am not."

"Then we'll hang ye!"

"I can't prevent you from doing that, but I can defy you to make me take the oath of allegiance to a tyrant like King George."

The patriot's voice rang out loud and clear, and a chorus of oaths escaped the lips of the Tories.

"Oh, string 'im up, cap'n."

"Yas; le's don' wait no longer."

"He's too blamed sassy."

"Giv' ther word, cap'n, an' we'll h'ist 'im inter ther other worl' in er jiffy."

"Oh, sir, have mercy," pleaded the woman, approaching and facing the man addressed as cap'n. "Do not hang my husband."

"Ef he'll take ther oath we won' hang 'im, old lady," was the reply, "but ef he won' take ther oath, w'y, et's his own fault ef we hang 'im."

The woman leaped to her husband's side and said, pleadingly:

"Please take the oath, Dave!"

The man seemed to be undergoing a violent mental struggle, but presently he shook his head and said firmly:

"I can't do it, Lizzie."

"But, Dave, think. If you refuse, you will lose your life."

"I can't help that, Lizzie," was the firm reply. "If I

were to take the oath I would abide by it, and I would rather die than fight for the tyrant king and raise my hands against the patriots who are fighting for independence."

"Wich proves whut I sed erwhile ergo, Dave Boggs," growled the leader; "yer er fool."

"And you are a villain, Sam Sickles," was the prompt reply.

An oath escaped the lips of the Tory.

"Heer, don' tork sassy ter me," he cried; "I don' 'low no man ter do thet. Air ye goin' ter take ther oath? This is ther las' time I'm goin' ter ax ye."

"And for the last time, I answer that I will not take the oath of allegiance."

A scream escaped the lips of Mrs. Boggs, and she clung to her husband, begging him to take the oath and save his life, but he shook his head, and at a word from Sickles one of the men tore the woman away from her husband, and pushed her back out of the way.

"Up with ther cussid rebel," roared Sickles.

"Oh, don't—don't hang him!—don't hang my husband," wailed the woman.

"Oh, my poor, dear father," cried the girl, tears streaming down her face.

The men who had hold of the rope lurched back, putting all their weight on it, and the patriot was pulled up off the ground.

A few moments he hung there, struggling at the end of the rope, and then there came the sharp, whip-like crack of a musket and the rope snapped as if made of pack-thread, dropping the patriot to the ground.

The Tories stared at one another, and then as one man turned and gazed in the direction from which the shot had seemed to come.

Just across the road was a little knoll, on which grew trees and bushes, and the shot had seemed to come from there.

As the patriot fell to the ground, Mrs. Boggs and her daughter Lucy leaped forward, and kneeling by his side, loosened the rope and took it from around his neck, and then began chafing the almost insensible man's temples and wrists. The Tories were so occupied with gazing wonderingly toward the knoll that they did not even note this action on the part of the woman and girl.

Presently Sickles, the Tory leader, found his voice, and called out loudly:

"Who in blazes air ye, thet dar's ter take er han' in this heer affa'r which don' consarn ye ertall?"

"Oh, but it does concern me," came back the reply, promptly, and in a clear, ringing voice.

"Who air ye?"

"None of your business."

"Let's go fur ther cuss, boys," cried Sickles. "We'll l'arn 'im how ter interfere whur he hain't got no bizness."

"Thet's right, cap'n; we'll hev two hangin's instid uv on'y wun," cried one of the men.

"Thet's right," from another.

"So we will," declared a third, and they started to cross the road. As they did so a warning voice was heard; it rang out loud, clear, and threatening:

"Stop!"

The Tories wondered at themselves for doing it, but they stopped. There was something so authoritative and imperative in the tone of the voice that they could not help it.

"That's right," came again in an approving tone; "you are wise in obeying. If you were to cross the road it would mean the death of at least one of your number."

"Some down an' show yerself," cried Sickles.

"So that you may fill me full of bullets, eh?" in a tone of scorn.

"Thet's jes' whut we'd do, ye bet," was the growling reply.

"Exactly, so I am aware; and for that reason I must refuse to comply with your kind request."

"Say, cap'n, theer's on'y wun feller," said one of the men in a low tone. "We hain't goin' ter let wun cuss make us stan 'heer, air we?"

The stranger on the knoll seemed to be possessed of very keen hearing, for he said quickly:

"If you value your lives, you will do just what I tell you. You have just had a specimen of my marksmanship and I give you fair warning that if you attempt to cross the road I shall shoot, and shoot to kill."

"Yer on'y tryin' ter skeer us out," cried Sickles. "Yer won' dar' shoot wun uv us down."

"You think not?"

"I'm sure uv et."

"What makes you so sure of it?"

"W'y, ef ye wuz ter kill wun uv us, ther res' would kill ye, jes' ez shore ez ennythin'."

"You'll have to lay hands on me, before you can hurt me," was the reply. "I will shoot one of your number dead, and then when you get here you will find me missing."

"But we'll fin' ye, all right; ye won' be able ter git cl'ar erway."

"You will find that you are mistaken. I am as much at home in the timber as any redskin you ever saw. You could not run me down in a hundred years."

The Tories looked at one another in an undecided manner.

After a brief period of silence Sickles called out:

"If you will ergree not ter interfere with us erg'in, we won' bother ye."

"You mean that if I will agree to stand here and see you hang that man, there, without raising a hand to prevent it, you will not bother me?" There was an intonation of scorn in the voice.

"Wal, I mean thet ye hain't ter interfere, no matter whether we hang 'im er not."

"I am sorry, my friend, but I cannot give you any such promise."

"Ye kain't?"

"No."

"Ye mean thet ye won't."

"Yes."

"Wal, whut right hev ye ter interfere?"

"The right of any man with a heart in his bosom, to interfere when they see a wrong being perpetrated."

"Ther hain't no wrong bein' perpetrated."

"You say not?"

"Thet's whut I say."

"And you think it is not wrong to hang a fellow human being?"

"Not under ther sarkumstances."

"What are the circumstances?"

"He's er rebel."

"A rebel?"

"Yas."

"What do you call a rebel?"

"W'y, er man whut—whut is in symperthy with ther people whut is fightin' erg'inst King George."

"Oh, that is your definition of a rebel, eh?"

"Yas."

"Well, I don't call such a man a rebel."

"Ye don'?"

"No."

"Whut d'ye call 'im?"

"A patriot."

"Et's all ther same."

"No, there's a difference between a rebel and a patriot, but you haven't sense enough to see it."

"Whut's thet," howled Sickles, "d'ye mean ter tork ter me in enny sech fashun ez thet?"

"Of course. Why not?"

"Becos I've killed men fur torkin' er heap less sassy than that."

"Oh, you have?"

"I hev!"

"And you are a dangerous man?"

"Ye bet I am dangerous, ez ye'll fin' out afore ye gits through with me."

"And you will find that I am a dangerous man before you get through with me, too."

"Bah! Air ye goin' ter prommus not ter interfere with us?"

"You mean am I going to promise to stand here, idle, and permit you to hang that patriot?"

"Wal, hev et thet way ef ye want. He's er rebel, an' hez refoosed ter take ther oath uv alleegence ter ther king, an' he hez got ter die."

"He refused to take the oath of allegiance, did he?"

"He did."

"Preferred death to taking an oath to fight for the king and against the people who are struggling for liberty, eh?"

"Yas—ther more fool he."

"The more man he. There is more manhood in him than in all your whole gang put together."

"Whut's thet! Say, ye air too sassy, young feller."

"How do you know I'm a 'young feller'?"

"By yer voice, an', too, er man uv jedgment wouldn' do whut ye're doin'."

"Oh, he wouldn't?"

"No. Theer air mighty few people in this part uv ther kentry ez'd want ter tork sassy ter Sam Sickles."

"You are he, I suppose?"

"Thet's right; I'm Sam Sickles."

"All right, Mr. Sam Sickles; and now, let me tell you something: If you make a move to harm that man whom you were on the point of hanging, I will begin doing some sharpshooting—and every time my musket cracks, down will go one of your men, never to rise again. Do you hear?"

"Yas, I heer," in a growling voice.

"Then heed."

"W'y sh'd I, thet's whut I want. I know?"

"Because I say for you to do so."

"Wal, who in blazes air ye, thet ye sh'd dar' ter give orders ter Sam Sickles an' his men?"

"You wish to know who I am?"

"Yas."

"All right; you shall know. I am——"

"Wal," impatiently, "who in blazes air ye?"

"Dick Slater!"

CHAPTER II.

DEADLY WORK.

"Dick Slater!"

The exclamation escaped the lips of Sickles, and then he and his men looked at one another in wondering amazement.

They had heard of Dick Slater and his brave "Liberty Boys."

The youths had been in South Carolina some time, and had made themselves known.

They had scattered a number of Tory bands to the four winds, and had been engaged in a number of encounters with the British.

As in every one of the encounters they had come forth victorious, and had created havoc in the ranks of the enemy, they had made their name not only known, but feared as well by the redcoats and Tories of the South.

Hence, when in answer to the question as to who he was, the concealed stranger answered "Dick Slater," it was not so surprising that the Tories should stare at one another in amazement and consternation.

"Say, ef ther cuss is reelly Dick Slater, he means jes' whut he sez," said one of the Tories.

The others nodded assent to this proposition.

"But he's on'y wun man," said Sickles, "an' even ef he's Dick Slater, he kain't do much uv ennythin' erg'inst er duzzen uv us."

"But ye know whut he sed," from another; "he sed ez how he is er dead shot, an' thet he'll drop us one at er time."

"But I think we kin ketch 'im, boys," said Sickles in a low voice. "All we'll hev ter do is ter make er rush, an' surroun' ther knoll."

"I'll bet thet ef we make er rush et'll mean ther death uv at least wun uv us," was the reply.

"Mebby so, mebbly not. Ef we make er quick break, an' dash ercrest ther road, he won't be able ter hit wun uv us, an' wunst we air in ermong ther trees we'll be all right."

"Mebby so," was the doubtful reply.

"Wal, air ye willin' ter be backed down and skeered out by wun man?" asked Sickles in a scornful voice.

"We leeve thet fur ye ter say, cap'n," said one. "Ef ye

want thet we shall resk goin' arter ther cuss, we'll do et. Jes' say ther word."

"Well, what are you fellows going to do?" came down in the clear, ringing voice of the "Liberty Boy." "I'm waiting for you to come to some kind of a decision; but if you'll accept my advice you will take your departure, and make no attempt either to injure the patriot or to attack me."

"Yer jes' tryin' ter skeer us out," said Sickles.

"Not at all. I am speaking for your own good. If you attempt to injure the patriot or to get at me, it will mean death to some of you—and indeed the whole gang, if you keep after me long enough."

This was said in a matter-of-fact voice, without the least bit of bravado, and the Tories looked at one another in rather a dubious manner. Sickles, however, was a stubborn scoundrel, and was not willing to give it up so. He was determined to at least make an attempt to get at the bold speaker.

Secretly he hoped that they might be able to capture Dick. He was aware that there was a price on the youth's head. A reward of five hundred pounds was offered by the British for the capture of Dick Slater, and if he and his comrades could capture the "Liberty Boy," it would be a good stroke of work, and would put some good British gold in their pockets.

So he said to his men, in a low, cautious voice which he thought could not be heard by the hidden youth: "We mus' make an attempt ter git at ther cuss, boys. Ready, now—go!"

As he spoke he leaped forward with all his might, and his men followed suit.

They were quick, and it seemed that the attempt was to be successful, and that the "Liberty Boy" was not going to be able to fire a shot at them before they would disappear from sight in the timber.

This was the thought that came to the Tories, but just as they were congratulating themselves on the success of their plan, there came a sharp, whip-like crack, and one of the Tories gave utterance to a gasping cry, threw up his arms and fell forward upon his face, dead.

The others were now safe within the shelter afforded by the trees, and with wild cries of rage, they rushed up the side of the knoll, their minds set on having revenge on the youth for laying their comrade low.

"Kill ther cuss!"

"Shoot 'im!"

"Don't let 'im git erway."

"Capter 'im, an' hang 'im ter ther tree erlongside uv Dave Boggs."

Such were a few of the cries from the lips of the Tories as they raced up the side of the knoll, and there is little doubt but what Dick Slater would have fared badly had they come upon him.

This they did not do, however.

When they reached the top of the knoll, and looked around them, the youth was nowhere to be seen.

He had quickly made his escape from the dangerous neighborhood.

The Tories, pistols in hand, glared around them with looks of anger and disappointment on their fierce faces.

"He's gone!"

"He hain't heer!"

"He's got erway!"

"An' arter killin' Bill, too!"

"An' we kain't git revenge fur ther killin' uv Bill!"

"We must," grated Sickles. "The scoundrel can't be fur erway. Scatter, an' look fur 'im."

The men hesitated.

"Say, cap'n, ef wun uv us wuz ter fin' 'im, whut d'ye s'pose would happen?" asked one.

"W'y, ye'd git er chance ter git revenge fur ther killin' uv Bill."

The other shook his head.

"I think thet more likely we'd git er chance ter go an' jine Bill on his journey ter ther other kentry—whurever thet may be."

"Bah! Ye hain't erfeerd uv ther cuss, air ye?"

"Wal, I dunno's I'm erfeerd, kerzackly, but I'm beginnin' ter berleeve thet ther cuss ez calls 'imself Dick Slater an' sez he'll kill ever' wun uv us ef we chase 'im, means whut he sez."

"Wal, come erlong, then, an' we'll all stay tergether an' hunt fur 'im. He won't dar' try ter git ernuther shot at us, I'm sart'in."

"That is where you are mistaken," came in a clear, ringing voice; "if you try to catch me I shall end the days of one after another until all are finished. Better go away about your business!"

"Quick! Come on, boys," cried Sickles, darting in the direction from which the voice sounded; "we'll git 'im now!"

The men followed, though they feared that they were doing a foolish thing in doing so.

They had suddenly conceived a wonderful respect for the prowess of the youth who called himself Dick Slater, and would have preferred to postpone the attempt to get

revenge for the death of their comrade to some more propitious time.

There was nothing for it, however, but to follow the lead of their commander, and they did so.

The result was just what they expected and feared it would be.

They had gone but a short distance when there came a sharp report, and another one of their comrades threw up his hands and fell forward upon his face.

That he was dead they had but little doubt.

The "Liberty Boy" had given them fair warning that he would shoot to kill, and they had had ample evidence in the severed rope that he was a dead shot.

"Fire a volley, men," roared Sickles in a rage. "We may be able to wound or kill him."

The Tories fired a volley in the direction from which the shot had come, but as they fired entirely at random, they did not have much hope that they had done any damage.

A mocking laugh came to their hearing, proving they were right in thinking they probably had not hit the youth.

"Fools," came the word in scathing tones, "you might chase me all day, and waste hundreds of bullets, and not do me any harm. And at the same time I would be picking you off one at a time. If you are wise, you will give this thing up, bury your dead comrades, and get away from here."

The men paused, and looked at one another in a dubious manner.

"I think ez how thet is good advice, cap'n," said one, "an' I'm fur takin' et, ye bet!"

"So'm I," from another, "ef we keep on follerin' ther cuss, he'll wipe out ther hull crowd uv us—thet's whut I think erbout et."

The others nodded their heads to signify that they thought the same about the matter.

In truth, Sickles himself was not very eager to pursue the "Liberty Boy" farther.

It had been such a costly experiment, already, that he was ready to give it up.

"All right, men," he said, "we will let the fellow go, now, but we will see if we can't git even with 'im afore very much longer."

"Oh, we've got ter git even with 'im!" said one. "He hez killed Bill 'n' Jim, an' we hev got ter git revenge onter ther cuss fur doin' uv et."

"Are you going to do as I have advised you?" asked

the cool voice, coming from a different direction from what the Tories had expected.

"Yas, we're goin' ter do whut ye advise—fur ther present," replied Sickles. "But I tell ye this don' end ther matter by er long chalk."

"Oh, you are going to try to get revenge on me, are you?"

"We air not on'y goin' ter try; we're goin' ter do et."

"Well, my friend, you are at liberty to try all you want to, but you will find it about the biggest job you have ever undertaken."

"We'll resk thet."

"All right; and now, get to work. Bury your two dead comrades, and then take yourselves away from here."

"We'll 'tend ter our business, an' ye 'tend ter your'n."

"That is what I am doing. And mind you, if you offer to injure the patriot, yonder, I will open fire on you again, and I think that next time I shall make it my business to select you for a victim."

Sickles turned pale and muttered an oath under his breath. Aloud he called out:

"We won't do nothin' ter Dave Boggs, now, but he'll hev ter look out afterward. He's got ter take ther oath er die!"

"And if you cowardly scoundrels come fooling around here again, trying to make him take the oath, you will die!"

The Tories made no reply, but made their way to where their comrades had fallen. They found both men stiff in death, and one of their number went down to Dave Boggs' house and borrowed a spade.

They buried their dead comrades, returned the spade, and then Sickles said to the farmer, fiercely and threateningly:

"We hev giv' up ther idee uv makin' ye take ther oath ter-day, but we'll come erg'in, an' nex' time ye'll take et er die fur shore."

"I will never take the oath of allegiance to the tyrant, King George," was the firm reply, "and if you come here again, I shall try and be ready to give you a warm reception, for I understand that it will mean death for me to fall in your hands, anyway."

"Ye bet et will, an' I kin tell ye et won't do ye enny good ter try to resist us, fur we'll git ye ennyway."

"Yes, and I'll get some of your cowardly gang while you are doing it, too," was the undaunted reply.

"Bravo, sir," cried a ringing voice, coming from the side of the knoll. "That is the way to talk to the cowards."

The Tories were very angry. Their faces were red with

rage, and the chances are that but for the voice of Dick Slater, they would have attacked the patriot. This served as a warning to them, however, and they held their passion in check, and refrained from doing anything.

"We air goin' now," said Sickles, "but we'll be back. Look out fur us, fur when we come erg'in we'll make shor work 'uy et, and end yer career!"

"Bah! I am not afraid of you," was the bold reply. "You are a gang of cowards."

With growls and muttered oaths, the Tories turned and walked away down the road.

"Keep straight on," called out the voice of the "Liberty Boy." "Don't think to play any tricks, for you won't be able to do it."

The Tories walked onward without making reply, and presently disappeared around a bend in the road a quarter of a mile distant.

As they did so Mr. and Mrs. Boggs and Lucy saw a bronzed-faced, handsome young man of perhaps twenty years emerge from the timber just across the road and approach them.

"You are Dick Slater?" said the patriot, advancing and giving the youth his hand. "I am proud to know you, and I owe you thanks for saving my life from the Tories."

"Yes, I am Dick Slater," was the quiet reply, "and you are more than welcome to what little I have done. It is a pleasure to me, always, when I am enabled to spoil the plans of redcoats or Tories."

"So I should judge, by what I have heard of you."

"I will leave you now, for I wish to follow those Tories and see where they go and what they do," said Dick.

Then with a bow he turned and hastened away in the direction taken by the Tories.

CHAPTER III.

REDCOAT VS. REDCOAT.

On this same afternoon—indeed, it was now evening—a party of redcoats and Indians was encamped at the foot of a bluff at a point perhaps three miles southward from the home of Dave Boggs, the patriot.

The redcoats and Indians in question were from the army of General Prevost, who was marching from Savannah, Georgia, upon Charleston, South Carolina, with a view to causing the patriot army there to surrender.

This was a small scouting party, consisting of five In-

lians and five white men, and it was perhaps five miles in advance of the main force.

In spite of the fact that the British general, Prevost, had secured a lot of Cherokee Indians as allies, they and the white soldiers did not get along any too well. The redecoats despised the redskins, and the red men of the forest had a healthy contempt for the white men, whose lack of knowledge of woodcraft was sufficient to stamp them, in the minds of the Indians, as being not much force.

Of course, when they were with the main army they could not indulge themselves in controversy to any great extent, but when they got away from the main force, in a little party like this one, there was sure to be more or less bickering.

It had been so on this occasion. This party had been away from the army all day, and the white men and Indians had had several disputes over various trivial matters. And now, encamped at the foot of the bluff, one of the white men—a big fellow, and a sort of bully, named Hugo Kern—and the leader of the Indians—also a big, muscular specimen of manhood, called Red Plume—had become engaged in a quarrel.

Hugo had started it by stating that he did not believe they were on the right road to Charleston. "We have wandered off to one side," he declared, "and I doubt if we are as near Charleston as we were this morning."

"Ugh!" grunted Red Plume, with as much contempt as his stoical face was capable of expressing. "What white man know 'bout it?"

"What do I know about it?" cried Kern angrily, "well, if I don't know as much about it as a blamed, greasy, dirty redskin, then it is very strange."

A dark look came over the redskin's face.

"White man heap—um—sassy!" he muttered.

"Well, I have a right to be 'sassy,' redskin," was the retort. "I didn't come three thousand miles across the big waters to be insulted by a redskin that doesn't much more than know he's alive."

"Ugh! Red Plume him much 'live,'" grunted the Indian. "White man no b'leeve Red Plume 'live, him prove."

"Bah! You couldn't prove anything, Red Plume!"

The Indian frowned, and his lips were compressed tightly. There was a glint in his dark eyes.

"Mebby white man make heap mistake," he said.

The other laughed sneeringly.

"Not a bit of it, redskin."

"White man heap think um know much," said the Indian, with what was a very good sneer.

"Say, you blamed redskin," growled Kern, shaking his finger at the Indian, "do you want trouble with me?"

The Indian did not flinch, but met the gaze of the white man unflinchingly, his beady eyes shining with an angry light.

"Me no kin say me want trouble," was the reply, "but me no 'fraid to hab trubble, if white man want to make it."

"Oh, you're not afraid, hey?" sneeringly.

The Indian straightened up, and replied proudly:

"White man right," he declared. "Red Plume no 'fraid uv white man—no 'fraid uv ennythin'."

Hugo Kern laughed loudly.

"Oho, you're one of those dare-devil afraid-of-nothing sort of chaps, are you?" he exclaimed.

"Me no 'fraid," was the grim reply. "If big white man think me 'fraid, him kin 'fin' out."

Kern's comrades and the Indian's brother braves had been silent spectators and auditors, so far, but now one of the redecoats growled:

"Say, go in and cut the redskin's comb, Hugo. He's too blamed sassy, and needs a lesson."

"White man no kin cut Red Plume's comb," said the redskin promptly and defiantly. "If him t'ink so, him kin try."

Kern hesitated, but not because of fear.

"Red Plume is the chief of the redskins," he said to his comrades, "and if I was to kill him Prevost would go for me."

"Don't use weapons, then," suggested one, "you are both big fellows, and the Indians pride themselves on their strength; so discard your weapons and have a hand-to-hand encounter with Nature's weapons. The best man can be determined in this manner as well as by use of weapons."

This proposition met with Kern's approval.

"I'm willing," he said, "if the redskin is. I'd like a chance to take some of the conceit out of the fellow."

"White man mean fight with jes' um han's?" Red Plume asked, holding up his muscular hands to illustrate.

Kern nodded.

"Yes, that's the idea, redskin."

"An' no use knife nur ennythin'?"

"Exactly, use nothing but Nature's weapons," said he, too, held up his hands.

"Heap good!" the Indian exclaimed. "Me make white man think him got hol' uv big bear—ugh!"

Then he leaped up and laid aside his knife and tomahawk.

The white man rose leisurely, unbuckled his belt, handed it to one of his comrades, and then took off coat and hat.

"There, I guess I am ready for the contest, redskin," he said coolly.

"Red Plume, him heap red dy," was the reply.

"Now, let's understand this thing before we begin," said Kern. "We are to use Nature's weapons; that is understood."

"Ugh!" grunted the redskin, nodding.

"And we are to use them in any way we see fit?"

"Ugh!" with another nod.

"All right; that is satisfactory. Just sail in, redskin, as soon as you like, and see how quickly I will teach you a few things."

The Indian accepted the invitation, and rushed upon the redcoat, intending to close with him.

Here was where he made a mistake.

His thought, of course, was that the white man would close with him and that the contest would be one of strength and agility, but the redcoat had other views.

In England he had been noted as a boxer.

He was pretty well skilled in the art, and he wished to show the redskin a few tricks.

Therefore, as the Indian rushed upon him, instead of closing with him, the redcoat's fist shot out, and catching his dusky opponent fair between the eyes, knocked him down.

A chorus of grunts, whether of anger, excitement, surprise, disappointment or all four, escaped the lips of the other redskins.

As for the redcoats they were delighted.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed one, "you surprised him that time, Hugo."

"I guess he wasn't looking for that."

"I wonder how he likes it?"

"I'll bet he saw more stars than he ever saw in the daytime, before."

This from the others.

Hugo grinned in a satisfied manner. He had treated the redskin to a surprise, sure enough.

The Indian lay flat on his back, staring up at the sky, for a few moments, evidently partially dazed by the blow, and then he stirred, rose to a sitting posture, and looked around him.

He looked at his brother braves, blinked in a peculiar manner, and then turned his eyes on his opponent. A vicious look appeared in his eyes, and a dark frown came over his face as he glared at the white man.

"Ugh," he grunted, "white man heap much tricky."

"Oh, no, there wasn't anything tricky about that," said Kern, with a grin. "I didn't use anything but Nature's weapons."

"But use um in tricky way," insisted the Indian.

"Not at all. It was understood that we could use them in any way we wished."

The Indian shook his head.

"Me 'no unnerstan' that white man wuz goin' to stick his arm out in Injun's face," he said; "me t'ought white man an' red man take hol' uv each udder, an' den the bes' p man would be foun' out."

The white man shook his head.

"Oh, no; that wasn't the understanding at all. We were to use nothing but Nature's weapons, true, but we were to use them in any way we saw fit."

"Stick um fist out in udder man's face uf want to, eh?" the Indian asked.

"Certainly. Do anything you like. All that is necessary is that we stick to Nature's weapons, and do not use weapons of man's manufacture."

The Indian leaped to his feet.

"All right," he said with a nod; "heap good. Red Plume fight like white man nex' time."

"All right," said the redcoat grinning. He could not help smiling as he pictured to himself the rude, wild son of the American forests trying to compete with him in a sparring match—he, the hero of half a hundred contests at fisticuffs.

"White man him goin' to git heap big dose uv him kin' uv fightin'," declared the redskin, gravely, and Kern and his comrades laughed loudly.

"Now for a boxing-match," said one; "it's redcoat against redskin."

"This will certainly be funny," from another.

"Get ready to take a lesson, yourself, Hugo," from another.

Red Plume's brother braves were evidently somewhat excited, and they made a number of remarks to their comrade in the Indian language.

A knowledge of the Indian tongue would have been worth considerable to Hugo Kern at that moment, but he did not understand the Indian language, and so had no suspicion of what was in store for him. He stood there, very self-satisfied and grinning. There is an old saying that "Pride goeth before a fall," and it was applicable here, if Kern had but known it. The fall was not far distant.

Kern was utterly unsuspecting that there was trouble in store for him.

He held the redskin in utter contempt, and the easy manner in which he had floored Red Plume made him think that he was to have a very easy time disposing of his dusky opponent.

He did not for a moment suspect that the Indian had a surprise in store for him.

He would have scouted the idea that a greasy, dirty redskin could be smart enough to play a trick on him.

He did not know that cunning is one of the strong points in the makeup of the American Indian, but he was to soon learn this truth.

"Is white man red dy?" asked the Indian.

"Oh, yes, I'm ready," was the careless reply; "just sail in, Red Plume, whenever you please, and I will give you lesson number two in the manly art of self-defense."

Perhaps Red Plume did not understand what Kern meant by the reference to "the manly art of self-defense," but it did not matter. He knew what he was going to do, and that was enough.

"All right; me sail in heap big lot, you bet," said the Indian, who had been among the white men enough to acquire some of their expressions. "White man want look heap lot out!"

"Oh, don't you worry about me, redskin," with a grin. "I guess I can take care of myself all right."

The Indian approached Kern, moving slowly and cautiously, and watching the white man warily. There was an inscrutable look on the dusky face and in the dark, beadlike eyes, but the Indian's mind was working rapidly and keenly. He was well aware of what he was doing, and had calculated the probable actions of his opponent with wonderful correctness.

As he drew nearer to the redcoat he began making awkward motions with his arms, as if he intended to fight with his fists, after the fashion of his opponent.

Kern thought this was what the Indian intended to do, and he laughed aloud, his comrades joining him in a boisterous manner.

"Look out for yourself, Hugo!"

"He is a scientific sparrer, old man!"

"Yes, one can see that with half an eye!"

"You will be able to learn a lot from him, Kern!"

Such were the exclamations from the redcoats.

The Indians sat beside the campfire and stoically watched the progress of the affair. Their faces were impassive, but they were as eager and excited as redskins ever get to be, just the same. They knew what their brother brave intended doing, and were waiting for him to make the move.

As he drew near the white man, who stood straight up, his hands dropped at his side, a grin on his face, Red Plume made even more motions with his fists, and at the same time he bent and swayed his body from side to side with the grace and ease of a panther.

Presently the Indian was as close as he wished to be, for the accomplishment of his purpose, and then—something happened.

The Indian did not strike at the face of his white opponent at all, as Kern had supposed he would, but instead, with a movement so quick as to have made it impossible for his opponent to avoid the danger had he seen it coming, the redskin dealt the redcoat a terrible kick, full in the stomach.

Kern was taken wholly by surprise. He had expected that the Indian would strike at his face with his clenched fist, and had been prepared to parry the blow, and deliver one in return that would have upset his dusky foe; but instead of this the redskin had kicked him in the stomach, and so strong was the kick that the redcoat was doubled up like a jack-knife and hurled backward several feet. He struck in the edge of the camp-fire, scattering brands to the four winds, and his shoulders struck against the pole on which hung an iron kettle nearly full of hot water, and as the pole was knocked out of the forks of the sticks, where it had been resting, the water was spilled, and a goodly portion of it was distributed over the person of the redcoat.

The breath almost entirely knocked out of his body by the terrible kick from the Indian's foot, burned by fire-brands, scalded by hot water, is it any wonder that Kern kicked and floundered about, and gasped and gurgled? The chicken with its head cut off often used as a simile in describing actions such as were being indulged in by the redcoat, would not have been in it at all with Kern. He kicked and floundered at a terrible rate, but he was in such a dazed, rattled state of mind that he did not better his condition much, and had not his comrades leaped forward and, seizing hold of him, dragged him away from the fire, there is a likelihood that he would have been burned to death.

And at this moment a human form came rolling down the steep side of the bluff, and striking in the midst of the redcoats, knocked them right and left.

CHAPTER IV.

OVER THE BLUFF.

Dick Slater hastened in the direction taken by the Tories, and in order to guard against an ambush, he went in a roundabout way.

He traveled at a rapid pace, and ten minutes later he came in sight of the men he was desirous of following.

They were making their way along at a walk, and were talking in an earnest manner.

The youth did not know it, but the fact was that the Tories were aware that he was following them.

They had paused immediately after having disappeared from the sight of Mr., Mrs., and Lucy Boggs, and one of their number had stolen back, taken up a position behind a tree, and saw all that followed.

He saw Dick emerge from the timber, advance, shake hands with Mr. Boggs, and then, after the exchange of a few words, hasten toward the spot where he was concealed.

"Ther cuss is goin' ter try ter foller us," he said to himself. "Wal, that's all right. I'll go back an' tell Sam, an' then we kin lead Mr. Dick Slater er merry chase, w'ile we think up sum plan fur gittin' holt uv 'im."

He gave another glance in the direction of the "Liberty Boy," and then turned and hastened back to where his companions were in waiting.

"What are they doing?" asked Sickles.

"Ther cuss, Dick Slater, is comin' arter us, cap'n!" the men said in excitement.

"Coming after us?"

"Yas."

"Well, he has plenty of impudence! I wonder if he thinks he can capture or whip our whole crowd?"

"I think it more'n likely thet he is going ter try ter foller us an' see whur we stay, cap'n."

The other nodded.

"I guess that it is," he agreed. "Well, come along. We will lead him a chase through the timber, and will talk the matter over as we go, and try to make up our minds how to go about it to capture him."

"Theer's er reward offered fur 'im, hain't theer, cap'tain?" asked one, as they made their way through the timber.

"Yes, five hundred pounds."

"Thet's er heap uv munny."

"Yes, so it is, and if that fellow follows us we will make a prisoner of him, and deliver him into the hands of General Prescott, and get the money."

"How air ye goin' ter go erbout ketchin' 'im, cap'n?"

"I hardly know. He is a wary bird."

"Ye bet he is. He'll be hard ter ketch."

After some further discussion Sickles thought of a plan which he hoped might be successful.

"Ye know whur Atkin's bluff is, don't ye, boys?" he asked.

They nodded assent.

"Well, I'll tell you what we'll do: We will lead him to that place, and just before we get to the bluff we will dodge off to one side, after moving forward a ways more rapidly than we have been going. Dick Slater will think that he is going to lose track of us, and will hasten forward. He will find himself on the brink of the bluff most before he knows it, and then we will appear suddenly with drawn pistols, and form in a half-circle around him. He will have to surrender, for we will have the advantage of drawn weapons and superior numbers, and of course he won't dare attempt a leap over the bluff."

"Thet's right, cap'n; ther bluff is nigh onter er hundred feet high, and purty nigh straight up an' down."

"Yes, if we can get him to the brink of the bluff, we will have him at such a disadvantage he won't be able to do anything, only surrender."

They moved onward, headed toward the bluff, and at last were close to it. They had gone a roundabout course in reaching the point, which had caused them to be an hour and a half in getting there, although only about three miles from the Boggs home.

When within one hundred yards of the edge of the bluff the Tories suddenly moved forward at a rapid walk, and when within twenty-five yards of the brink they suddenly divided into two parties of five each, and darted off at right angles to the right and left.

This maneuver was executed so quickly and unexpectedly that Dick, who had followed the Tories with the unerring skill for which he was famous, had been taken by surprise.

His idea was that the Tories had suddenly become cognizant of the fact that they were being followed, and that they were endeavoring to make their escape from surveillance. With this thought in his mind he darted forward, being determined to again get sight of them.

Onward he ran, fifty, seventy-five, one hundred yards, and instead of catching sight of the Tories, he found himself standing on the brink of a bluff—almost precipice, in fact.

Here he paused, and recoiled—for the timber and underbrush had hidden the existence of the bluff till he was almost at the jumping-off point—and as he did so, he heard a noise as of shuffling feet.

He whirled instantly—to find himself confronted by ten fierce-looking men in a semi-circle, each man with two pistols leveled at his (Dick's) head.

The youth recognized the men as being the Tories he had been tracking for an hour and a half, and too late

he realized that he had been made the victim of a clever trick.

For a few moments not a word was spoken.

The Tories stood there, grinning in triumph, and holding the pistols leveled, while Dick looked back at them in a defiant manner.

"Well," said Sickles, presently, "you had your fun with us a little while ago; now it is our turn to have fun with you."

"Indeed?" remarked Dick calmly.

"Yes, indeed! You are in our power, are you not?"

"Well, it looks as if you had a slight advantage."

"A slight advantage?"

"Yes."

"Bah! We have you at our mercy."

"Oh, I am not so sure about that."

"You are not?"

"No."

"You must be crazy."

"Oh, no."

"Then you are a fool."

"Scarcely that, either, though I admit that I was foolish to permit myself to be trapped so neatly."

"Ha! You admit that you are trapped?"

"Well, it looks as if I have gotten into a place that it will be difficult work getting out of."

"You cannot get out. You are indeed trapped. Just throw your pistols down on the ground, Dick Slater!"

"Throw my pistols down?"

"Yes."

"What is the use of my doing that?"

"You will do as I tell you," angrily.

A glint of fire came into Dick's eyes.

"I will do nothing of the kind," he retorted.

"You won't?"

"I will not. If you wish me disarmed, you will have to have one of your men do it. I shall not voluntarily disarm myself."

"Joe," said Sickles, addressing one of his men, "disarm the rebel scoundrel."

"You are a scoundrel yourself, you Tory hound!" said Dick.

"We'll soon take some of that spirit out of you!" said Sickles threateningly.

"How will you do it?"

"We will tie you up to a tree and whip you till the blood runs down to your heels."

"Why not shoot or hang me?"

"We prefer to hand you over to the British and secure

the reward of five hundred pounds which is offered for you."

"So that is what you intend to do with me, is it?"

"Yes," in a triumphant tone.

"Whip me till the blood runs to my heels, and then hand me over to the British for a reward, eh?"

"That is it, exactly."

"Well, let me tell you something, you Tory hound. You will never put your plan through to a successful issue."

"I'll show you," angrily. "Disarm him, Joe."

The man addressed stepped forward, for the purpose of disarming Dick, but the instant he was within reach the youth's fist shot out, and alighting fair between the Tory's eyes, knocked him down with a thump.

"Curses on you, but you shall suffer for that," cried the Tory leader. "Seize him, men, and if he attempts to resist shoot him dead."

As he spoke Sickles leaped forward, the other Tories doing likewise, and involuntarily Dick leaped backward.

He had forgotten for the moment that he was standing with his back to the precipice, and the result was that he went over the edge like a flash.

The thought flashed through his mind that he would fall to a terrible death far below, but it happened that the face of the bluff was not absolutely perpendicular. It sloped sufficiently so that, while one could not stand up, or move downward at a moderate pace, still it was possible to stay one's descent to some extent.

And this Dick managed to do. Although he had actually tumbled over the bluff, yet he managed to dig his fingers and toes into the dirt and retard his downward progress in some degree, so that when he reached the bottom he was not crushed into a shapeless mass.

Another thing that tended to interfere and prevent him from breaking his neck, legs, or arms was that he struck on top of the party of redcoats who were at the moment engaged in pulling their injured comrade away from the campfire into which the Indian had kicked him—for the person who had tumbled down the side of the bluff and alighted on the backs of the redcoats, as detailed at the close of the preceding chapter, was Dick Slater, as the reader has guessed.

For a few moments after Dick's sudden and unexpected appearance upon the scene the Indians and redcoats were incapable of making a movement of any kind. The redcoats lay sprawling where they had fallen, while the redskins stared in open-mouthed amazement.

To tell the truth, the Indians were somewhat frightened. They were ignorant and superstitious, and the

first thought that came to their minds was that the youth who had dropped down upon them after the fashion of a meteor, was some strange visitor from the spirit-land.

It was this fear on their part that saved Dick from capture, for the Indians were in a position to seize him had they so desired. He was almost stunned by the shock of the impact against the forms of the redcoats, and lay where he had fallen after rolling off their backs to the ground.

Dick was one who would not stay in a dazed condition long, however, and after a few moments of blinking up at the sky, it all came to him, and realizing that he was among enemies, he lost no time in acting.

Leaping to his feet, he started to bound away, only to find himself confronted by the Indian chief, Red Plume, whose victory over Kern, the redcoat, had caused him to feel rather brave and important. He had been frightened the same as his brother braves had when Dick first appeared in such a sensational manner, but he had quickly recovered his equanimity, and when the youth leaped to his feet he decided to interfere and bar his flight.

Dick Slater was not the youth to permit a greasy redskin to stand between him and freedom, however, and he dealt the chief a terrible blow in the stomach with his fist, doubling the redskin up as if he were a jack-knife, and depositing him on the ground with a thump.

Then, before the other Indians could leap up to make an attempt to capture him, Dick leaped clear over Red Plume's head and darted in among the trees, and disappeared from sight.

As he disappeared there came the sound of a volley of pistol-shots from up on the top of the bluff. The Tories had seen Dick making off, and had attempted to bring him down.

CHAPTER V.

TRACKING THE TORIES.

The sound of the volley startled the redcoats and Indians.

They imagined that they were attacked, and leaping up they seized their muskets and other weapons, and bounded away into the edge of the timber. Here they took refuge behind trees, and peered out, in an attempt to see whence came the shots.

"Hello, down thar!" came the hail from the top of the bluff.

The redcoats and Indians looked upward.

They saw the Tories standing at the edge of the precipice one hundred feet above them.

"Hello, yourself," called out one of the redcoats. "Where are you?"

"We air friends."

"Friends?"

"Yas."

"Why in blazes did you fire on us, then?"

"We wuzn't firin' at ye."

"You weren't?"

"No."

"Who were you firing at, then?"

"At ther feller who fell down ther bluff, an' then g'erway."

"Oh, you fired at him?"

"Yas."

"What is he—rebel?"

"Yas; one of ther greatest rebels in this part uv th' country."

"You don't say?"

"Yas. Ye hev no idee who he is?"

"No."

"Then I'll tell ye."

"All right; do so."

"He is Dick Slater!"

The redcoats and Indians stared at one another in amazement, for all had heard of Dick Slater and his "Liberty Boys."

"Say, do you really mean that?" called up the redcoat.

"Uv course I do."

"Where did you run across him?"

"Erbout three miles up ther country, toward Charlton."

"How did you happen to run across him?"

"We wur tryin' ter make a Whig take ther oath uv allegiance ter ther king, an' Dick Slater interfeered an' killed two of my men."

"He did?"

"Yas."

"Why didn't you kill the scoundrel?"

"We did try, but he was too smart for us."

"How came he to be down here, with you after him?"

"He followed us."

"Oh, he did?"

"Yas."

"And you attacked him?"

"Yes, we slipped out to one side, let him pass us, an'

then jumped out and formed er ha'f-circle aroun' 'im. We thort we hed 'im, as ther precypuss wuz at his back, but he fell over it, an' his good luck 'wuz with 'im, an' he wuzn't hurt."

"You are right. I guess we fellows that he fell on were hurt worse than he was."

"I s'pose theer hain't no use uv tryin' ter ketch ther cuss?"

"I guess not. If he's Dick Slater he could get away from us easily enough."

"Wal, he's Dick Slater; 'tenny rate, he said he wuz."

"Say, do you fellows live around here?" the redcoat asked.

"Yas."

"Then come down; we want to have a talk with you. I judge that you can give us some information."

"All right," was the reply. "We'll come down, but we'll hev ter go erbout ha'f er mile afore we kin fin' er place ter git down ther bluff."

"All right."

The Tories turned away, and disappeared from sight, and then the redcoats turned their attention to their own affairs. Hugo Kern, who had come to grief at the hands—or foot, rather—of the Indian, was suffering considerable, both from burns from the firebrands and the hot water, and he was groaning most dismally, and muttering curses under his breath, and anathematizing redskins in general and Red Plume in particular, and at the same time he was threatening what he would do to his late opponent.

"Just you wait, redskin," he said, fiercely. "I'll settle with you for this, see if I don't."

"Red Plume, him reddey to settle, any time," was the proud reply.

"Oh, you think you're mighty big, because you happened to catch me unawares and get the better of me in the way you did, don't you?" sneeringly.

"Red Plume great warrior," was the proud reply.

"Bah! You're nothing but a greasy redskin."

"White man nothin' but scalded hog—ugh!" the Indian retorted.

With a curse, the redcoat drew a pistol, and would have fired at the Indian had not his comrades leaped forward and jerked the weapon out of his hand.

"You mustn't do that, Hugo," said one.

"But the confounded redskin called me a hog."

"Oh, never mind him. You called him a greasy redskin."

"That's what he is, too, and——"

"That what white man is, too—a scalded hog!" cried the Indian.

He held his tomahawk in his hand, and was evidently ready for a fight, if the whites should make it necessary. His brother braves, too, had their tomahawks in their hands.

"There, he called me a scalded hog again," cried Kern. "That is adding insult to injury, and blame me if I think I ought to stand it." •

"It won't do for you to try to kill Red Plume," said one of his comrades in a low voice. "If you were to do so, the other redskins would take a hand, and we would have to do the same, and it would be a general fight, with the chances good that some of our fellows would get our heads split by a tomahawk. Then, when we went back, we would catch it from General Prevost."

"Well, he wants to stop calling me a scalded hog," growled Kern.

"He will, if you don't say anything more to him."

"I won't say anything more to him, but before he and his crowd leave our army I'm going to settle with him. I'll kill him if it is the last thing I do on earth."

"All right. But let the matter rest now."

"Put up your tomahawks," said the peacemaker to the redskins; "he won't do anything."

"All right; him no do ennythin', we no do ennythin'," said Red Plume, gravely; "but uf him try for shoot Injun, then we do sumthin'."

"Of course you could not be expected to sit still and permit yourself to be shot down. But he won't shoot."

Footsteps were heard at this moment, and a little later the ten Tories appeared.

They were given a welcome by the redcoats, but the Indians regarded the newcomers with stoical indifference.

"What is your name?" one of the redcoats asked of the leader of the Tories.

"Sam Sickles," was the reply.

"And you and your men are loyalists?"

"Yas."

"And you say that you live in this part of the country?"

"Yas."

"Then you can doubtless give us the information we desire, without our having to go farther in search of it."

"P'raps so."

The redcoats and Tories talked for more than an hour, and then Sickles and his men took their departure, and made their way through the timber in a northeasterly direction.

When Dick Slater bounded away from the redcoat and Indian encampment he did not go far.

A quick glance over his shoulder had shown him that he was not pursued, and he paused and took up his position behind a tree.

None of the bullets fired by the Tories had touched him, and he was feeling pretty well satisfied.

"I have been pretty lucky," he thought. "I feared I was in for it when the Tories surrounded me up there on the bluff, but the fall over the precipice turned out to be a lucky happening, and here I am, free and comparatively safe."

He was determined to watch the redcoats and Indians, and try to find out something that would be of value.

He heard the conversation which took place between the redcoat and Sickles, the Tory leader, and was amused by the little scene where the redcoat had made the attempt to shoot Red Plume.

"The redcoats don't seem to get along very well with their redskin allies," he thought. "Well, that is as it should be."

When the Tories appeared in the encampment he listened with all his ears, and was enabled to hear some of the conversation which ensued. He gained some information, but not as much as he would have liked to have secured.

He kept his place behind the tree, and when the Tories took their departure he stole away in pursuit. It was now dark, and he had little difficulty in keeping on the track of the Tories without their suspecting that anyone was following them.

"I am going to find out where they stay," Dick told himself. "I may wish to find them quickly, some time, and if I know where their rendezvous is I will have no difficulty in doing so."

Dick followed the Tories a distance of three miles at least, and then he was delighted to find that he had run the enemy to earth.

The Tories came to a cabin standing deep in the forest, on the bank of a little stream, and when they entered the cabin the "Liberty Boy" realized that this was the home of the scoundrels.

"I'll slip up close and listen to their talk for a little while, however, and make sure of the matter," the youth said to himself, and he stole forward.

He was soon beside the cabin, and began searching for a point of vantage. He well knew that in most log cabins there were crevices in the walls, where the "chinking" has

fallen out, and through which it would be possible to both see and hear what was going on and being said within.

He did not have to search long before finding such a crevice.

It was on a level with his face when he was standing erect, and this made it easy for him to look through, and see what was going on.

The Tories had lighted a candle, and were seated in a circle, on blankets spread on the floor, and the majority were smoking. There was a gloomy look on the face of nearly every one of them. The reason for this was explained in the first utterance that was overheard by Dick.

"Wal, two uv our fellers air missin', boys." The words were uttered by Sickles, and he looked around at the faces of his comrades as he spoke.

The men nodded, and one took the pipe from his mouth and said :

"Yas, they're missin'; but we know who caused 'em ter be missin', an' ye bet ef ever I git er chance ter revenge 'em, I'll do et."

"Me, too!" from another. "Dick Slater hed better keep 'imse'f outer my way."

"I'd like ter kill ther cuss, uv course," said Sickles, "but when he is worth five hunderd poun's, I don' think et'd be er good plan ter put 'im out uv ther way."

"Thet's so. Five hunderd poun's is er lot uv munny."

"Yas, an' ye see, ther British'd shoot er hang 'im, so we'd be gittin' revenge jes' ther same."

"Thet's right. We'd git ther munny an' revenge both."

"An' I'll tell ye whut I think would be er good thing fur us to do," said another.

"Whut?" asked Sickles.

"W'y, make et our biznes ter hunt fur Dick Slater an' try ter capter 'im."

"Thet's whut I'd like fur us ter do," from another.

"Wal, I'll tell ye," said Sickles slowly. "I'd like ter capter Dick Slater, but ye mus' recommember thet he hez er ban' uv fellers ter back him up, an' et'd be orful hard ter capter 'im. Theer must be er hunderd uv ther 'Liberty Boys.' "

"But mebbey we kin ketch 'im when he's by himse'f, like he wuz this arternoon, Sam."

"P'raps so; but even then we hain't got no sart'inty uv capturin' 'im; we had 'im cornered this evenin', but he got erway frum us. "

"Thet wuz a axident, Sam; ef he hedn't fell over ther precypuss we'd hev got 'im, shore."

"Wal, I guess we would."

"Yas, theer hain't no doubt erbout et."

"But he did git erway."

"Yas, ther cuss wuz lucky."

"He's allers lucky, so fur ez I kin l'arn frum whut I heer erbout 'im."

"He's on'y hooman; he kain't allers git erway."

"Mebby not."

"No; I'm bettin' thet ef we git 'im cornered erg'in, he won' make his escape."

"I hope not."

"All right, gentlemen; make all the wagers you like," thought Dick. "I will do my best to get away, you may be sure of that."

The youth remained standing there for some time, listening to the conversation of the Tories, but heard nothing that was of any particular interest. He had hoped that they would speak of their plans for the immediate future, but they did not do so, and finally he decided that he would take his departure.

He was about to turn away, when he heard Sickles say:

"I wonder why Bob don't come in?"

This gave the youth a start, and he counted the Tories, to find that there were only nine in the cabin.

"Then there must be one outside, somewhere," the youth said to himself, and with the thought that the Tory might appear and discover his presence, he started to turn around, to steal away—only to find himself seized in strong arms!

CHAPTER VI.

A HARD STRUGGLE.

The "Liberty Boy" was surprised, and yet not surprised.

He was surprised by finding himself seized so suddenly; yet was not surprised, for the reason that he knew one of the Tories was out of doors.

He realized that the man who had seized him was the missing Tory.

The youth grappled with his antagonist on the instant.

By a herculean effort he managed to twist around until his face was toward his assailant.

Then the struggle began in earnest.

Dick was surprised by one thing.

The Tory made no outcry.

The youth would have thought that the fellow would call out to his comrades, and have them come to his assistance.

He did not do so, however, and of course this was more than satisfactory to Dick.

Presently a solution of the mystery of the fellow's silence occurred to Dick's mind.

The Tory wished to make a prisoner of him, alone and unaided.

"He would like the glory of having it to say that he captured Dick Slater without assistance from anyone," thought Dick. "Very well, my friend. I am glad that you have a feeling of vanity, for it may result in my making my escape."

The youth had his wits about him, and fearful that the noise of the struggle might be heard by the Tories in the cabin, he managed to work his opponent away from the cabin.

When he had got the Tory away a distance of twenty feet or more Dick began making preparations for getting the better of the fellow.

He had worked on the defensive so far, and had simply offered sufficient resistance so that the Tory could not get the advantage.

Now, having got his assailant far enough away from the cabin for his purpose, Dick proceeded to take the offensive.

The Tory was a strong, husky fellow, but Dick was stronger, and what was more, he was skilled in the art of wrestling; and his opponent was not.

Then, too, Dick had had a great deal of experience in hand-to-hand encounters of this kind, whereas this was probably the first real contest of the kind that the Tory had ever been engaged in.

Experience counts in practically everything, and Dick was an experienced veteran, while the Tory was a mere novice.

Had the fellow had sense enough to realize that he could not capture the youth alone, and given the alarm, his comrades would have come to his aid, and the ten would have had little difficulty in overcoming the one; but he did not have sense enough to do this, and the result was that he was given an unpleasant surprise very speedily.

Dick feared that some of the Tories might come out to see what had become of their comrade at any moment, and so he did not lose any time after getting ready to get to work, and he attacked the fellow so fiercely as to quickly make him aware that he had taken too big a contract in attempting to capture the youth alone. This realization came to him too late, however, for when he would have cried out and given the alarm, he could not do so, Dick having succeeded in securing his deadly throat-hold.

The iron grip of the "Liberty Boy" compressed the Tory's windpipe to such an extent that he could not cry out to save his life. He tried to do so, but a gasping gurgle that could not have been heard ten feet was the only result.

Dick knew that he had the man at his mercy, but it would take nearly a minute to render the Tory unconscious.

Would the Tories who were in the cabin open the door and come forth in search of their comrade before that time was up?

The youth hoped not, but fearing that such might be the case, he held himself in readiness to break loose from his antagonist and flee at an instant's notice.

He believed that he would be able to make his escape, even if the men were to come out in search of their comrade.

The Tory struggled fiercely in a last effort to wrench his throat free from the ironlike grip of his antagonist, but he could not do it, and soon he almost ceased struggling, and let go his hold on Dick. His knees bent, and he sank toward the ground, almost insensible—and at this moment the door of the cabin opened, and Sam Sickles stepped forth, followed by two or three more of the Tories.

The "Liberty Boy" decided to give them a surprise.

Exerting all his strength, he lifted the Tory high above his head, took a couple of quick steps forward and hurled the limp form against Sickles.

So great was the force with which the form of the insensible man struck Sickles that he was hurled backward against the others, and they all went down in a struggling heap in the doorway.

Yells and curses went up from the astonished scoundrels, and their startled comrades who had not yet emerged from the cabin leaped forward in amazement, giving utterance to exclamations of wonder and surprise.

"Whut's ther matter?"

"Whut hit ye fellers, ennyway?"

"Who knocked ye down?"

Such were a few of the exclamations.

Sickles and his three comrades who had been knocked down by the impact of the form of their comrade, struggled to their feet, giving utterance to curses.

Then, as their eyes fell upon the still form of their unconscious comrade, their curses changed to exclamations of amazement and wonder.

"Et's Bob!"

"So et is!"

"An' he's dead!"

"Thet's right!"

"I wunder who done et?"

"I'll bet et wuz thet cuss, Dick Slater!"

Such were some of the exclamations, and then Sickles said:

"Mebby Bob hain't dead, boys. Lif' 'im up an' bringe 'im inter ther cabin an' we'll see ef we kin bring 'im to."

Four of the Tories seized hold of their insensible comrade and carrying him into the cabin, deposited him on a blanket.

"I don' berleeve he's dead," said Sickles. "Gimme some whisky, sumbuddy, an' we'll soon fin' out."

Some whisky was poured down the insensible man's throat, and presently he moved and coughed. The potent fluid was having the desired effect.

"He's erlive!" cried one.

"Yas, an'll be all right in er minnet, ef he don't choke ter death on ther whisky."

"Ye needn' hev no fears on thet score," said one, with a grin; "ther whisky hain't never be'n made yit thet'll choke Bob ter death."

This was probably true; at any rate Bob did not come anywhere near choking to death, this time, but presently opened his eyes, and rose to a sitting posture.

He glared wildly around, at the faces of his comrades, and cried out:

"Whur is he?"

"Whur is whō?" asked Sickles.

"Ther cuss whut choked me."

"Sumbuddy choked ye, eh, Bob?"

"Wal, I jes' guess ez how sumbuddy did choke me," with a grimace, and then he felt gingerly of his throat.

"Feels ez ef some uv et wuz gone," he said grimly.

"Who wuz et thet choked ye, d'ye think, Bob?" asked Sickles.

"I dunno fur sartin, uv course," was the reply, "but I think et wuz thet cuss, Dick Slater."

"Whut!"

"Dick Slater!"

"Say, d'ye reely think et wuz him?"

"I wunder ef he would be bold enuff er foller us heer, an' spy onter us?"

Such were some of the exclamations, and Bob nodded his head and said in a decided tone of voice:

"I'm shore et wuz him. An' ez fur him bein' bold enuff ter foller us an' spy onter us, ye needn' think fur er minnet thet he hain't! That feller hain't afeerd uv ennythin'."

"How did you come to get into a contest with ther cuss, Bob?" asked Sickles.

"I'll tell ye. Ye see, I wuz jes' ergoin' ter come inter ther cabin, when I happened ter ketch sight uv whut looked like sumbuddy standin' berside ther cabin, peekin' in. I tip-toes aroun' till I wuz clost up erhind ther cuss, an' I seen thet et wuz er young-lookin' feller, an' I made up my min' et wuz Dick Slater."

"How c'u'd ye tell he wuz young-lookin'?"

Ther light come through ther crack, an' lit up enuff uv his face so I c'u'd tell thet."

"Oh, yas, but w'y didn' ye give er yell an' bring ther es' uv us fellers out ter he'p ye capter ther cuss?"

Bob looked sheepish.

"Wal, ter tell ther trooth," he confessed, "I thort thet would capter ther cuss myse'f, an' git ther credit fur join' uv et."

"You wuz er fool," growled Sickles.

"I know thet now, Sam, but et's too late ter do me enny good."

"Yas, so et is. But ye'd know better anuther time, I reckon."

"Waal, I guess I would. No more tacklin' thet chap by myself, ef ye pleeze. Say, he's ther stoutest feller ever I ed holt uv in all my life."

"He must be stout if he wuz stouter than you, Bob."

"Wall, I wuzn't able fur ter do ennythin' ertall with him."

"Is thet so?"

"Ye bet. He hed things all his own way, an' afore I knowed I hed tackled whut wuz wusser'n a hull herd uv painters an' wildcats, he hed got me by ther throat, and he queezed my win'pipe so tight I couldn' yelp ter save my life. W'y, them fingers uv his'n felt jes' like they wuz made uv iron, an' they gripped me tighter'n er vise."

"An' ye couldn' free yerse'f?"

"Wal, I guess not. No, sir. All I c'u'd do wuz ter wilt right down, an' I done et. But, say, whut happened, ennyway? Ther las' I remember wuz he he wuz chokin' me, an' I wuz wishin' some uv ye boys would come out uv ther cabin."

"Wal, thet's jes' whut happened," said Sickles. "Me an' three uv ther boys did go out uv ther cabin, an' jes' ez we stepped out uv doors sumthin' hit us kerslap, an' down we went in er pile."

"Whut hit ye?"

"Ye did."

"Me?" in surprise.

"Yas."

"I don' understan'."

"Et's simple enuff. Ther moment we stepped out uv

doors, ther cuss ez hed be'n chokin' ye, jes' h'isted ye up in ther air erbove his head, an' throwed ye erg'instant us like ye wuz er bag uv taters."

"So thet wuz ther way uv et, hey?"

"Yas."

"Wal, I guess I'm lucky ter be erlive."

"Ye hain't fur wrong erbout thet, Bob, I'm thinkin'."

"Blazes, but I'd like ter ketch ther feller whut han'led me so rough."

"So would we all like ter ketch 'im," said Sickles, "but doin' uv et, thet's ther diffikilty."

"Say, whut d'ye s'pose he follered us heer fur?" asked one of the Tories.

"Hard tellin'," replied Sickles. "Mebby he's thinkin' uv gittin' arter us with his gang uv 'Liberty Boys.'"

"Thet would be bad fur us, wouldn't et."

"Et would, fur er fack."

"Air ye goin' ter stay heer an' risk et?"

"Oh, we are not here much of the time, so I don't think theer is much danger uv them ketchin' us heer."

The Tories finally exhausted the subject, and after fastening the door threw themselves down and went to sleep.

Meanwhile Dick had made his way through the timber in the direction of Mr. Boggs' home.

"I might as well stay there overnight," he said to himself. "Then to-morrow I will go on further toward the south and watch for the coming of Prevost's army."

The fact that he was an expert woodsman was of great value to Dick, often, and it was of value to him on this occasion, for it made it possible for him to find his way to the Boggs home without much difficulty, even though he was a stranger to the locality.

Mr. Boggs and his wife and daughter were up when Dick got there. It was bedtime, but they had remained up in the hope that Dick would return.

They greeted him joyously, and asked what luck he had had in tracking the Tories to their rendezvous.

"I had very good luck indeed," said Dick, and then he told the story of his adventures since leaving them only a few hours before.

They uttered exclamations of amazement and almost horror when he told how he had fallen over Atkin's bluff, and all three said it was a wonder he was not killed.

"I am lucky," was the smiling reply. "I always manage to get out of the greatest dangers, and as a rule without getting hurt any to speak of."

He had been eating his supper while talking, and soon afterward all retired for the night. Dick did not think

there was any danger that the Tories would visit the house that night, so had no hesitancy in going to sleep.

CHAPTER VII.

A QUARTETTE OF TORIES.

Next morning, after breakfast, he mounted his horse and rode away toward the south.

It was his purpose to look for the coming of the British army.

It had been reported that General Prevost and a strong force was on his way from Savannah, Georgia, for the purpose of forcing the patriots at Charleston, South Carolina to surrender, and he wished to learn whether or not this was the truth.

He rode toward the south a distance of perhaps four miles, and then came to a stop on the summit of a high hill.

On the top of the hill were a number of trees, and there was sufficient underbrush to conceal his horse in, so that chance passersby would not see the animal and come and investigate.

Having dismounted and tied his horse, the youth climbed one of the trees and gazed long and earnestly toward the south.

He could see no signs of the British.

"I am confident that they are coming, though," the youth said to himself. "Well, what shall I do?"

After some thought, he decided to remain where he was during the day.

He would keep a lookout for the British, and if they failed to come in sight he would return to the home of Mr. Boggs and pass the night.

If the British, on the other hand, should come in sight, he would visit their encampment, and try to find out how many men there were in the force, and whether they had cannon, and everything of that kind.

Mrs. Boggs and Lucy had put up plenty of food to last him all day, and he could just as well stay there throughout the day as not.

Suddenly Dick heard voices, and looked down, but could see no one. The foliage on the tree was so heavy that he could not see down through it.

He worked his way slowly and cautiously down, until he could see the ground, and saw four men seated on the ground under the tree he was in.

A closer look revealed the fact that the strangers were young men; indeed, they were mere youths of perhaps sixteen or eighteen years.

They were dressed in the rough clothing such as worn by the farmers and planters of the vicinity.

The young "Liberty Boy" wondered who the youths were and what they wanted.

He was glad to note that they had not yet discovered the presence of his horse in the vicinity.

Hoping to learn something about the young men, Dick listened to their talk.

"I tell ye I hain't ergoin' no funder," said one of the youths decidedly.

"Hain't backin' out, air ye, Sam?" asked another.

"No, I hain't backin' out, but I don't feel like walkin' my laigs on ter jine ther British, I'm fur waitin' till ther cum heer."

"Mebby they won't cum," said another.

"Then I won't jine 'em, fur I hain't ergoin' ter wait myse'f ter death ter git ther chance."

"I dunno but yer head is level, Sam," said another. "berleev I'm fur waitin', too."

"An' so'm I," from another of the quartette.

This left only one in favor of going on, and he then said, sullenly:

"All right. Ef ther res' uv ye hain't ergoin' on, then uv course I won't, eether."

"Thet's ther way ter tork," said the one called Sam. "We'll stay right heer till ther British cum erlong."

"Mebby they won't cum this way," suggested another.

"Yas they will. Ef they air goin' ter Charleston, they hev ter pass clus ter heer, an' we'll be able ter see 'em."

Dick understood matters, now, he was sure.

The four youths were on their way to join the British army, and help fight against the patriots.

They were Tory youths, and doubtless lived in the neighborhood.

What interested Dick most, however, was the decision they had come to, that they would remain where they were till the British came along.

This did not suit him at all.

He had no desire to remain perched on a limb of the tree all through the whole, long day.

It would not be pleasant at all.

Then, too, his lunch was in the saddle-bags, on the horse's back.

If he were to remain in the tree all day he would have to go hungry.

He was not disposed to do this.

There were but four of the youths, and they were not dangerous, he decided.

They were armed with a pistol each, he saw, but he was not afraid on that account. He doubted whether they could hit the side of a barn at twenty paces.

Dick Slater had more than once during the years he had been in the army gotten the better of four redcoats, men who were veterans, and he said to himself that he would certainly be more than a match for four Tory youths who had never smelled burning powder.

After some thought Dick made up his mind as to his course, and he began climbing softly downward.

When he reached the lowest limb he paused and looked down.

The youths, utterly unsuspecting of his presence, were talking of what they would do when they had become soldiers.

Had they glanced upward they would have seen Dick, but they did not do this.

They were thinking of what they were talking about, and had eyes only for each other.

It was only about twelve feet to the ground, and Dick decided to drop down and give the Tory youths a surprise. Accordingly he let himself down by his hands, and then, getting into his hold, dropped.

He alighted on his feet within two yards of where the four youths sat, and as he did so he whipped out his pistols and leveled them.

The Tory boys were staring at him in open-mouthed amazement and consternation.

"W—who air ye?" gasped the one that had been addressed by Sam.

"Who am I, do you ask?" said Dick.

"Y-yas."

"Who do you suppose I am?"

"I—I—dunno."

"Well, you don't need to know."

"Whut d'ye want?"

"To tell you something."

"Ter tell us sumthin'?"

"Yes; to give you warning." Dick spoke very soberly and impressively.

"Ter giv' us warnin'?"

"Yes."

"W-whut erbout?"

"About this matter that has brought you to this spot."

"W-whut is thet?"

"You know very well," sternly. "The matter of joining the British."

"J'inin' ther British?"

"Yes; you boys were on your way to join the British, and help fight against the patriots. Is it not so?"

The youths knew it would do no good to deny this. They were smart enough to know that the young stranger had overheard their conversation, and while they suspected he was a patriot, and were afraid of him, still realized that it would do no good to deny. So Sam said, as boldly as he could:

"Y-yas, thet's so."

"That's right; own up. I heard you talking, and know all about it."

Dick was silent for a few moments, during which time he eyed the youths closely.

They returned the look, but divided their attention between Dick and the pistols. It was evident that they did not like the looks of the yawning muzzles of the weapons.

"Say, them pistols might go orf, mister," said one, apprehensively.

"They won't go off unless you fellows make it necessary," was the cool reply.

"Say, w'y not let us go?" asked Sam. "We hain't wantin' ter bother ye, an' ye hedn't orter wanter bother us."

"Oh, don't be in a hurry," said Dick. "I haven't made up my mind what to do with you."

"Ye hain't got no right ter do ennythin' with us," sullenly.

"You think not, eh?"

"Yas. We hain't done nothin' ter ye."

"You haven't?"

"No."

"Well, I think differently."

"Whut hev we done ter ye?"

"Well, for one thing, you have come in here and settled yourselves down on the very spot where I have intended to stay for awhile. I was here first, and think I have the best right to stay here."

"Thet's all right. We'll go erway," and Sam made a motion as if he would rise.

Dick shook one of the pistols threateningly and frowned, however, and the Tory youth sank back and became motionless, while his eyes rolled wildly.

"S-say, y-ye might s-shoot er feller," he stammered.

"Right," nodded Dick, smiling grimly. "It wouldn't be the first time, either, I assure you."

The Tory youths were pretty thoroughly frightened, and were quite pale.

It was evident that they did not like the situation.

"You must not be in a hurry, my friend," said Dick calmly. "Haste is neither dignified nor conducive to health. Go slow, and take it easy. That is the best way."

"But ye said ez how ye wanted this place fur yerself," said one of the youths.

"And so I do. But I wish to have a little talk with you young men before you go."

"W-whut d'ye want say ter us?"

"I wish to say to you that you are making a great mistake in making up your minds to join the British."

"Ye think s-so?"

"I know it. You young fellows are Tories, aren't you?"

The youths looked at one another, but knowing it would do no good to deny, Sam nodded and said:

"Y-yas, I guess we air."

"Why are you Tories?"

"W'y?" Sam looked puzzled by this question.

"Yes; I wish to know why you are Tories."

"Wal," said Sam, hesitatingly, "I dunno's I kin tell, exactly w'y—'nless et's becos our dads air Tories."

Dick nodded. "I guess that is the real reason," he agreed. "Certainly there is no other reason why you should be Tories. Can you think of one?"

Sam shook his head.

"I dunno's I kin."

"Do you know what a Tory is?" Dick asked.

The youths looked puzzled, and Sam said:

"Wal, I dunno's he's ennythin' on'y jes' er Tory."

"You don't grasp my meaning. I will tell you what a Tory is. He is an American who believes that King George of England has a right to govern we people of America. Isn't that right?"

"I guess thet's et," was the reply.

"And do you believe that?" Dick asked.

"I guess ez how I do."

"You believe that King George of England has a right to govern us, and make us pay tribute to him, and support him in luxury, do you?"

"I—I—guess so."

"Humph. Did you ever see King George?"

"No."

"Has he ever been in America?"

"Not ez I knows uv."

"You are right. He never has been in America. He has never seen a single one of the thousands of people of America. He knows little about us and cares less. And yet he makes us contribute thousands of pounds annually to his support? Is that right?"

The Tory youths looked puzzled and somewhat worried.

"I—I dunno," stammered Sam; "et don' seem te exactly right."

"Of course it doesn't seem right—for the reason th isn't right."

"Wal—mebby et hain't."

"Of course it isn't. The King of England has no right to make your father give him half of what he earned here in America by his labor than I have to do the same thing. If I were to come along and tell your father he had to give me half of his earnings, he would say I had no right to do it, wouldn't he?"

"I guess he would."

"Of course he would, and he would be right. Well, is what we patriots of America are saying to the King of England—and we are right."

"Mebby ye air, mister. In fack, I'm purty shore ye air."

"That's right. Now you are beginning to talk sensibly," said Dick, nodding his head approvingly.

"Say, I don't berleeve I want jine ther British," said another of the youths. "I never thort erbout ther matter afore, but now I've made up my min' thet er feller who go inter ther British army an' he'p fight fur er king who is robbin' uv 'im, is er blame fool."

"You are right, young fellow," said Dick. "Now we are talking good, hard sense. If you want to fight, join the patriot army and help fight against the king who is making a business of robbing the American people of their hard-earned money."

"I'll do et," the youth declared. "Ef I fight on either side et'll be on ther side uv ther patriots, ye bet!"

"An' so'll I."

"Me, too."

"Blamed ef I won't do ther same thing."

Dick Slater had converted the Tory youths.

CHAPTER VIII.

SPYING.

Seeing that he had nothing to fear from the youths, Dick thrust the pistols into his belt, and seated himself near the four.

It was plain from the expression on their faces that they were very much relieved by this action on Dick's part. The truth was they had been very much alarmed for their safety. They understood that the stranger youth was a patriot, and there was something about him that caused

hem to realize that he was no common fellow; that he was one who could be very dangerous if he so desired.

The pointing pistols had been the cause of a great strain on their nerves, and now that the strain was removed they felt very much better.

"Say, ef ye don't mind tellin', mister, we'd like ter know who ye air," said Sam.

The other three youths nodded assent, and all gazed at Dick with such eager interest that he decided to satisfy their curiosity.

"You wish to know who I am, eh?" he remarked with a smile.

"Yas."

"All right. Have you ever heard of a fellow by the name of Slater—Dick Slater?"

The youths started, and looked at Dick eagerly.

"Ye bet we hev."

"Yas, we've heerd uv him."

"Uv course we hev."

"Air ye Dick Slater?"

Such were the exclamations given utterance to by the four youths.

"Yes, I am Dick Slater," the youth replied.

"An' yer capt'in uv ther 'Liberty Boys'?" asked Sam.

"Yes, I am the captain of the company of 'Liberty Boys.'"

The youths stared at Dick as if he were a curiosity up for exhibition, and he could hardly keep from smiling. He managed to keep a straight face, however, and presently Sam exclaimed:

"Say, w'y kain't we jine yer 'Liberty Boys' an' he'p fight ur independence?"

The other three nodded their heads approvingly.

"Yas, w'y kain't we?" from another.

"I'd like ter," from a third.

"Let us do et, Dick," pleaded the fourth.

"This is rather a curious experience," thought Dick.

A few minutes ago these four youths were eager to join the British and fight for King George, and now here they are wanting to join my company of 'Liberty Boys' and fight against the king. Jove, I believe that if enough good talkers could be found, and they would go around over the country, explaining matters to the Tories, and placing the matter before them in the correct light, that at least fifty per cent. of them would come over and become patriots."

Aloud he said, "So you wish to join my company of 'Liberty Boys,' and fight for independence, do you?"

"We do," in chorus.

"Well, I like to hear you talk that way," said Dick. "It pleases me much better than to hear you talking of joining the British and helping fight for King George."

"And will ye let us jine ther 'Liberty Boys'?" asked Sam eagerly.

Dick pondered a few moments.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," he said, presently. "The British army is coming up from Savannah for the purpose of attacking the patriots in Charleston, as you know."

"Yas."

"My 'Liberty Boys' are in Charleston now, and we expect to have a battle with the British. Now, if you wish, you may join us and engage in the battle, and if, after that, you like it, and wish to continue with us, you may do so. If, on the other hand, you decide that you don't think you would like the life of a soldier, then you will be at liberty to return to your homes."

"Thet's fa'r enuff," said Sam. "Don' ye say so, boys?" to his comrades.

"I say so."

"Uv course."

"Yas, thet's plenty fair."

These remarks from the other three youths.

"All right, it is settled, then," said Dick. "From now on, until after the battle with the British, you are 'Liberty Boys.' After that you may make your decision, and it will lay with you whether you will be 'Liberty Boys' permanently or not."

This seemed to please the four youths immensely, and one and all insisted that they would be "Liberty Boys" permanently.

"That is all right," said Dick smilingly. "You will have the privilege of making your final decision after we have had the battle with the British. If after you have had that experience you wish to stay with us, and keep on fighting for liberty and independence, you may do so."

"Oh, we'll stay with ye, ye bet!" declared Sam, and the other three said the same.

Dick was not so sure of the matter, but he did not say so. He was well aware of the fact that heroes sometimes came from the most unpromising material. These rough-looking, uncouth youths might turn out to be heroes. It was impossible to judge by external appearances. It is a matter of history that General Gates turned up his nose at General Marion and his men because they were ragged and uncouth-looking. The patriot general made the mistake of judging by appearances. He thought that such ragamuffins could not be of much value as fighters, and refused Marion's proffer of himself and men, to assist in

the campaign against Cornwallis at Camden. Than the "Swamp Fox" and his nondescript band no better, fiercer, or more dangerous fighters ever lived, as the British could testify, but Gates thought differently, and declined the proffered assistance, making the mistake of his lifetime in doing so, for the men were mountaineers and natives of the State of South Carolina, and had full knowledge of the country, the roads, and everything, and would have been of inestimable value as allies. The result of Gates' action in this instance, and in disregarding the advice of his best officers, is a matter of history. He was surprised by Cornwallis, his army was routed, and scattered to the four winds.

But to return to the story. The four youths, now that they were "Liberty Boys," asked Dick what he intended doing, and he did not hesitate to tell them.

"I am here for the purpose of spying on the British," he replied. "We received word at Charleston that Prevost and his army was coming, and I was sent down here to watch for the British, to spy upon them, find out all I could about them, and then return to Charleston with the information, and that is why I am here."

"This is er good place ter be," said Sam. "Et's on er high hill, an' ye kin see er long ways. Ye'll be able ter see ther British wile they're er long ways orf."

"You are right. That is why I stopped here. I was up in the tree looking for the British when you fellows put in an appearance."

"Did ye see ennythin' uv 'em?" asked one of the youths, eagerly.

"No; they were not yet in sight."

"I'll climb up an' take er look," said another. "They may be in sight by this time."

"All right; go along," said Dick.

The youth climbed nimbly up into the tree. He was at home at this kind of work, for he had lived all his life in the timbered country, and could climb equal to a squirrel.

"See ennythin' uv ther British?" asked Sam, when his comrade had reached the top of the tree.

"No," was the reply. "They hain't in sight yit."

He came down a few minutes later, and the five talked for an hour.

Then Sam climbed up into the tree and made an observation.

The British were not yet in sight.

Every half hour or so one of the youths would climb up in the tree and look for the enemy, but up to noon the British had not appeared.

Then Dick brought forth his lunch, and as there was great deal more than he could possibly have eaten, divided it with his new allies. They had brought some food with them, and so there was plenty for all.

About three o'clock Sam, who had climbed into the tree top to make an observation, gave utterance to a cry of excitement:

"They're comin', Dick," he called down.

"You see them, then?" the youth replied.

"Yas, I see 'em."

"How far away are they?"

"'Bout two miles, I should say."

"All right. I'll come up and take a look."

The youth climbed the tree, and sure enough, away to the southward could be seen the British columns. The force looked like a long, brilliant hued serpent, winding its way slowly along. Indeed, the British moved so slowly, apparently, that it was as much as one could do to make out that they were moving at all.

"There seems to be quite a force of the British," said Dick, after he had taken a good look.

"How menny men d'ye think their air, Dick?" Sam asked.

"It is hard to say. I should guess there are at least two thousand of them, though."

"Say, thet's er lot uv men, hain't et?"

"Yes, quite a strong force."

As it would be an hour before the redcoats would reach the vicinity of the spot where the youths were, Dick went back down and took a seat under the tree. But Sam remained in the tree top, watching the British eagerly.

The other youths climbed up and took a look at the enemy, and they looked somewhat sober when they came back down.

"Well, it begins to look as if there would be trouble, eh boys?" said Dick with a smile.

"Ye bet et does."

"Thet's right."

"Yas; I guess theer's boun' ter be er fight."

Sam kept Dick posted as to the progress of the British, and an hour later, when the redcoats were moving past the point where the youths were hidden, along the road about a third of a mile distant, he climbed the tree and made a careful estimate of the number of men in the British force.

He was enabled to make a close estimate, and found that there were perhaps two thousand men.

"Well, that is information worth having," he said to himself. "It is always worth considerable to know ju

how strong the other fellows are. If we don't know we are unable to figure on anything in advance, and there is always the fear that we may be given an unpleasant surprise."

Dick and his four comrades remained where they were until the British were almost out of sight in the distance, and then they set out after the enemy.

"We will follow at a safe distance," said Dick, "and then to-night I will make an attempt to do a bit of spying on them, after which we will make our way to Charleston and report to the patriot commander."

This was the plan that was followed out.

They followed the British, and just as the sun was going down they came in sight of the encampment of the British; they could see it from the top of a hill on which they were standing.

"Whut are ye goin' ter do, Dick?" asked Sam.

"We will make a half-circuit, and go around the encampment and take up our position on the side next to Charleston, Sam; and then when we are through here we will have nothing in our way, but will be able to make a straight line for the city."

This was done, and an hour later they were on another hill on the north side of the British encampment, it being a little valley.

"Now, I will leave you boys here, to look after my horse and await my return," said Dick, "and I will go down to the encampment on a spying expedition."

The youths said they would stay there and wait for him, and he set out.

He made his way down into the valley, and approached the outskirts of the encampment.

When he was as close as he thought he had better venture, for the present, owing to it not being as dark as it would be later on, he paused, and standing concealed behind a tree, he watched what was going on with considerable interest.

At one side of the encampment were a lot of Indians. They kept to themselves, and did not mingle with the redcoats; this was because of the bad feeling that existed between them on account of the fight which had taken place between Red Plume and Hugo Kern, and detailed in another chapter.

General Prevost had learned of the fight, and it had taken all his diplomacy and the distribution of quite a good deal of British gold to get the Indians to agree to stay with the army.

The British general did not wish to lose his red allies now. After the battle they might go as soon as they

pleased, but he did not want that they should go before the battle. He reprimanded Kern for bringing about the dispute and fight with Red Plume, and the redcoat was suffering both mental and physical torture—for his burns and scalds were far from being well.

So interested was Dick in the scene before him that he did not hear a light footfall behind him, and he did not suspect the presence of anyone in the vicinity until after he felt himself seized from behind.

CHAPTER IX.

THE BRITISH APPEAR.

Instantly Dick realized that he had been seized by an Indian.

No redcoat could have slipped up and seized him without the youth hearing his approach.

The Indian was a muscular fellow.

This did not worry Dick, however. He was strong, and felt that he was more than a match for any redskin. The trouble was that the Indian might at any moment arouse the camp by giving vent to a cry for assistance.

The youth wondered that the redskin did not do this.

The truth of the matter was that the redskin was one who prided himself on his strength and prowess, and he had made up his mind to capture the spying white-stranger alone and unaided.

This was where he made his misake.

He thought he could accomplish this without much trouble.

He was to soon find out his mistake.

"Well," thought Dick, "if you are not going to give the alarm, and it is a struggle you wish, I shall be only too glad to accommodate you."

Then he began working to secure his favorite hold—on his opponent's throat.

If he could secure that the Indian would not arouse the camp, no matter how much he might wish to do so.

There is little doubt that the Indian was surprised by the wonderful strength displayed by his opponent, but he was proud and would not cry out; having made up his mind that he would effect the capture alone, he was determined to do it.

So the struggle went on.

They made some noise, of course, but they were far

enough away from the men in the encampment so that the noise was not heard.

The Indian had seized Dick from behind, and of course this gave him an advantage.

It was Dick's first work to counteract this.

He must manage to get turned so as to face his opponent.

This was a difficult thing to do, but presently he managed to do so.

It required a herculean effort, but he put forth the effort, and succeeded.

This surprised the redskin, and showed him that he had a big task before him, but he was stubborn and only became the more determined to make the capture.

The struggle went on, and presently Dick got the chance he was looking for, and with a quick movement seized hold of the redskin's throat.

As he compressed his steel-like fingers the redskin started to utter a cry.

He had suddenly realized that he was in great danger—that he had caught a Tartar.

He was too late, however.

The "Liberty Boy" compressed his windpipe so suddenly and fiercely that the Indian's attempted yell died away in a gasping gurgle.

The redskin was brave, however; he did not give up, by any means, but struggled more fiercely than ever.

He attempted to get hold of Dick's throat, and had he been able to do so it would have been a race as to which could hold out the longest without breathing.

But Dick would not let the Indian get the throat-hold.

He knew how deadly a hold it was, and kept his chin pressed tightly down upon his chest.

The struggle was now most fierce for a few moments, and then Indian began growing weak.

His struggles became weaker and weaker.

Slowly but surely he was being choked into insensibility.

The "Liberty Boy" knew that he had his opponent at his mercy.

If the redcoats or Indians in the encampment did not suspect that something was wrong and come to the Indian's assistance, he would soon be helpless in Dick's hands.

Of a sudden the redskin began struggling violently.

It was his last effort before succumbing.

He had no chance of freeing himself, but he did something almost as bad for Dick, for he managed to get his feet in among some dead underbrush, and the way he made it crack and rattle was a caution.

The nearest sentinel heard it, and called out:

"Hello, what's going on, there?"

Dick realized that it would not do for him to linger in the vicinity.

The entire camp would be aroused in a few moments.

He knew that his opponent was practically insensible.

Knowing this, he gave the redskin's throat a finishing fierce squeeze, and letting go, turned and bounded away through the timber.

The Indians and redcoats were already running toward the spot, and Dick knew they would find the body of the insensible redskin.

They would know an enemy had been there, and would at once give chase.

He would not have been the least bit afraid of being overhauled and captured by the redcoats, as they were not good in the work of getting around in the timber, especially at night; but with the Indians it was different. They were at home in the timber, and almost as much so at night as in the daytime.

Realizing the necessity, therefore, Dick ran as fast as he could.

He did not go straight toward the point where he had left his four comrades and his horse, however.

He made his way in a direction that would take him a third of a mile to the left of where his friends were.

Everything turned out just as he foresaw it would.

The redcoats and Indians came upon the insensible form of the redskin, and at once the Indian's brother bravely leaped away in pursuit.

They ran with all their might, but Dick was running very swiftly, and they did not gain on him.

The youth kept on in the course he was going till he was even with the point where he had left his friends, and then he turned sharply to the right.

A run of a minute and he reached the point he was aiming for.

"What's the matter?" asked Sam, eagerly.

"The Indians are after me," replied Dick.

"Injuns."

"Yes; we must get away from here in a hurry."

While talking Dick had untied his horse, and now he led the way to the road, the youths following with alacrity for they did not fancy being attacked by Indians.

When they reached the road they hastened along it at the top of their speed, and after a run of twenty minutes Dick slowed down to a walk.

"I think we are safe from pursuit now," he said.

"D'ye think so?" from Sam, who was panting.

"Yes; I don't think the redskins will be able to track us."

"I hope they won't!" said another of the youths.

It turned out as Dick had predicted.

Nothing was heard of the pursuers.

The five youths succeeded in reaching Charleston without further adventure, arriving there an hour later.

It was not yet late, and Dick decided that he would make his report to Lieutenant Moultrie, who was in charge of the patriot forces at that time.

Leaving the four ex-Tory youths at the quarters occupied by the "Liberty Boys," Dick made his way to headquarters.

Lieutenant Moultrie had not yet retired.

He greeted Dick cordially.

"You have returned from your trip, my boy?" remarked the lieutenant. "Well, what is the news?"

"The rumor that the British were coming was correct," said Dick.

"Ah, it was?"

"Yes, sir."

"Have you seen the British?"

"Yes, sir."

"When did you see them?"

"This evening."

"Where?"

"About four miles south of here."

"Ah! So close as that?"

"Yes."

"How strong a force, Dick."

"About two thousand."

"Two thousand?"

"Yes."

"I didn't think Prevost had so many."

"He has a lot of Indians."

"Indians."

"Yes."

"Humph! Well, that is just like him. He is unscrupulous."

"The British don't seem to care what means they use, they succeed in what they set out to do," said Dick.

"You are right. Is Prevost himself along with the force?"

"Yes, sir."

"And they will be here to-morrow."

"Undoubtedly."

"Well, we are ready to receive them—as ready as we can be with the slender resources that we have at our command."

"We haven't a very strong force, sir."

"No, we have but one thousand men, and the greater number of those are militiamen, who have never been in battle."

"Prevost has two to our one."

"Yes, and they are trained veterans. I wish Lincoln would come back in time to render us assistance."

"Is there any probability that he will do so?"

"I fear not."

"Well, we will give the British as good a fight as possible, sir."

"Yes, and I shall depend on you and your brave 'Liberty Boys' to set the example for the rest."

"We will do the best we can, sir," was the modest reply.

After some further conversation Dick returned to the quarters occupied by the "Liberty Boys."

He found everything as it should be there. The four ex-Tory youths had become used to their surroundings, and seemed to be feeling quite at home.

"Well, do you think there'll be a fight to-morrow, Dick?" asked Bob Estabrook, Dick's right-hand man, and the one who was always left in charge of the "Liberty Boys" when their commander was away.

"I rather think there will be a fight to-morrow, Bob," was the reply.

"Good! I'm glad to hear it."

"Afraid you will get rusty, old man?"

"Yes; we haven't had a good fight for more than a week."

Dick laughed. "That is a long time, isn't it?"

"Well, it seems so to me."

This was characteristic of the "Liberty Boys." They were never satisfied unless they were fighting the enemy, or at least scurrying around trying to get a chance to do so. For a week or more they had been "cooped up," as Bob expressed it, in Charleston, and it was wearing on them.

They wanted to be up and doing.

Next morning all was bustle and confusion in Charleston.

General Moultrie, assisted by Dick Slater, moved hither and thither, getting the men in position, and giving instructions.

It was expected that the British would put in an appearance some time during the forenoon, and it turned out that way.

The redcoats came in sight about ten o'clock.

They paused just outside the danger-line, and presently a trooper was seen riding forward, bearing a white flag.

"Will you ride out and see what is wanted, Dick?" asked General Moultrie.

"With pleasure, sir," said Dick, and leaping into the saddle, he galloped out and met the redcoat midway between the two forces.

"Well, sir, what do you want?" asked Dick, after they had saluted each other.

"General Prevost's respects, and he demands that you surrender," was the reply, delivered in rather a haughty and arrogant manner.

"I will return with an answer in a few minutes," said Dick, and he rode back and told General Moultrie what the redcoat had said.

"Go back, Dick," said the general, "and say to the messenger that I am authorized to ask that no attack be made by the British, and that South Carolina be looked upon as neutral, it being understood that she will take sides, when the war is ended, with such power as the treaty may direct."

"Very well, sir," said Dick; and then he rode back and told the messenger what General Moultrie had said.

"I will return with the general's answer in a few minutes," said the messenger, and he rode back to the British lines.

A few minutes later he returned.

"General Prevost's respects to General Moultrie," he said, "and he says that he will listen to nothing save unconditional surrender of the rebel forces in Charleston."

Dick rode back and told General Moultrie what the man had said, and the commandant nodded his head.

"Very good," he said. "We'll fight it out, then. Go back and tell him so, Dick."

The youth rode back to where the messenger awaited him.

"Tell General Prevost we will not surrender, but will fight it out to the bitter end," said Dick.

The redcoat saluted.

"Very well. I will tell him," he said, and then he rode back to the British lines, while Dick returned to the patriot lines.

"Now for a fight!" exclaimed Bob, gleefully.

CHAPTER X.

THE REDCOATS RETREAT.

The British were on the point of advancing to the attack when they learned that a large force of patriots was advancing from the west.

The patriots in Charleston learned of the approach reinforcements at almost the same time.

"It is General Lincoln getting back from Augusta," exclaimed Moultrie. "Good! Now we can take the offensive, and drive him back into Georgia."

After a few moments of thought, General Moultrie decided to send Dick and his "Liberty Boys" to meet Lincoln.

"Tell him just how the matter stands, Dick," said the general, "and he will probably attack the British at once. As the battle will be inaugurated from that side, instead of from here, you may as well take your 'Liberty Boys' with you."

This suited Dick first-rate, and in a few minutes the company of youths was riding rapidly to meet Lincoln.

The youth told General Lincoln how matters stood, and the officer ordered that an attack be made at once.

The patriot force turned aside, and headed straight for the British.

The redcoats realized that a fight was not to be avoided, and made hasty arrangements for staving off the new enemy.

This was a bit more than General Prevost had bargained for.

Still, he had confidence that his veterans would be able to beat the patriots off.

General Lincoln, well knowing the fighting abilities of the "Liberty Boys," gave them the post of honor, which was at the same time, of course, the most dangerous post of all.

The youths were to take the initiative, and by fighting hard, and holding their ground, were to furnish an example for the other soldiers to follow.

As a large percentage of the patriot force was made up of militia, this was deemed a good thing to do.

When the word was given to make the attack the "Liberty Boys" rode forward like a whirlwind.

As they neared the British lines they fired a volley from their muskets, and this was the signal for the rest of the patriots to fire a volley.

They did so, and the battle was on.

With wild cheers the "Liberty Boys" dashed forward.

The four ex-Tory youths were with them.

They had been furnished with horses, and had insisted that they would fight as good as anybody, and Dick had taken them at their word.

There is little doubt but that they were terribly frightened, but they were in the midst of the band of youths and

could not get out. Their only course was to stick with their comrades, and fight, and they accepted the situation.

They became imbued with the wild, reckless spirit that seemed to animate the "Liberty Boys," and whooped and yelled like Indians in their excitement.

"Down with the king! Long live Liberty!" yelled the youths, and they were upon the British.

For ten minutes—which seemed like hours—they fought there at close range, hand-to-hand.

It was a desperate encounter, and the "Liberty Boys" made a brave stand, indeed. The British were too numerous, however, and slowly but surely the youths were pushed back. They were setback, but not defeated, and the British were worse crippled than they.

Their brave stand had served the purpose intended, however.

The militiamen were enthused by the reckless daring of the youths, and went into the fight with the vim and energy of veterans, and the result was that Prevost's force was made retreat.

The veteran redcoats retreated slowly, true, disputing every foot of the way, but retreat they did, and while it could not be said to be a victory for the patriot forces, since the British held their own and did not fall into disorder, still it was the same as a victory, and the patriots were delighted.

When the British had retired to a large hill, which afforded them a good place to make a stand, they did so, and rather than risk losing a great number of his men, Lincoln ordered that the patriot forces withdraw and retire to Charleston.

This was done, and parties from both armies came forward and buried their dead and took care of their wounded.

Notwithstanding the fact that the "Liberty Boys" had rushed headlong into what would seem to be certain death for the entire company, only five were killed, while eleven were wounded, three of these seriously.

The "Liberty Boys" were accustomed to this, however, and while they were sorry to think that five of their comrades would never again be with them, they at the same time looked upon it with the philosophy that comes to veteran soldiers. It was to be expected. They all realized this, and held themselves in readiness to go when the summons came. They were fighting for liberty and independence, and felt that if they lost their lives it would be in a good cause.

By some stroke of good fortune, the four ex-Tory youths

had not only escaped with their lives, but had not even been wounded.

"How do you like fighting for independence?" asked Dick of Sam, when they were in their quarters in Charleston.

"All right," was the prompt reply. "Say, et beats ennythin' I ever done in all my life. I'd ruther fight ther redcoats than hunt painters an' wil' cats, blamed ef I wouldn't!"

The other three said the same.

"Then you think of staying with us, and become permanent members of the company?"

"Ye be," declared Sam. "We'll stay, ef ye'll hev us, hey, fellers?"

The other three gave a most emphatic response to the effect that they would.

"All right," said Dick. "We have lost five of our brave boys to-day, and can use you very well. Then, too, we are always willing to accept the services of fellows who can fight the way you four fellows fought to-day. You showed that you are not afraid of anything."

"I dunno 'bout thet part uv et," said Sam, with a sheepish look. "I don' want credit fur sumthin' I don' deserve, an' I'll own up thet I wuz skeered blame nigh ter death when we went ridin' right onter ther British, an' ef I c'u'd hev got out uv ther crowd, I'm afeerd I'd hev got out uv thet ez fas' ez I c'u'd hev made my hoss travel."

"Et wuz ther same with me, too," said another of the four, and the other two owned up, also.

"You are all right, just the same," said Dick approvingly; "the fact that you have owned up that you were afraid proves that you are naturally brave. It is only natural that one should feel afraid the first time they go into a battle, and you were given an unusually severe test."

"That's right," said Bob. "And you will probably not be at all afraid the next time you go into a fight."

"D'ye think so?" asked Sam, eagerly.

"Yes, that is usually the way."

"Wal, I hope so. But still, I think et'd be bes' ter put us four fellers neer ther middle uv ther crowd, so's we couldn' git out handy even ef we wanted ter."

"We will do so, if you wish it," said Dick, "but I have no fears that it would be at all necessary. Next time it would be impossible to keep you out of the fight unless we tied you to trees before we started."

Generals Lincoln and Moultrie held a council, and discussed the matter of making a second attack on the British, and Dick was called into the council.

Before they could come to any decision the news was brought in that the British were taking their departure.

This, of course, made an attack in force impossible, and so the discussion came to an end.

General Lincoln told Dick to take his "Liberty Boys" and follow the retreating British.

"Keep just far enough from them to be safe," he instructed, "and keep watch of them and see what they intend doing, and at the same time be ready to pounce upon any detachments that may be sent out to rob and plunder the patriots.

"All right, sir," said Dick, and he hastened back to the "Liberty Boys" quarters and told the youths to get ready to move.

He explained what they were to do, and fifteen minutes later they rode out of Charleston, and away toward the south, following in the wake of the retreating British.

"We must be careful, and not run into a trap, Dick," said Bob, after they had gone a ways.

"Yes; we'll stop when we get a little farther on, Bob," the youth replied, "and I will ride ahead and take an observation and see what the British are doing."

"I'll go with you."

"Very well."

A mile farther, and the party halted, and Dick and Bob rode forward to reconnoiter.

Pausing on the top of a knoll they dismounted, and while Bob held the horses, Dick climbed a tree and looked for the redcoats.

He saw them nearly a mile away, and marching steadily onward toward the south.

"See them?" called up Bob.

"Yes."

"Where are they?"

"A mile away toward the south."

"Still going?"

"Yes."

"I guess they are headed for Savannah."

"I think so."

"Yes; they have made up their mind that we are too strong for them, and that they could not capture Charleston."

"No doubt of it."

The youth remained in the treetop for more than an hour, and then descended.

"Where is the enemy now?" asked Bob.

"Almost out of sight to the south."

"Then we can advance."

"Yes."

They rode back to where the "Liberty Boys" were awaiting them, and Dick gave the order to advance.

Onward they rode for an hour, and then the two youths made another scouting trip, and discovered that the British were still marching steadily onward.

Having plenty of time to spare, Dick decided to take a little trip to one side, and visit the Boggs' home. He knew they would be glad to see himself and "Liberty Boys."

Then, too, he feared that it was possible that the band of Tories under Sam Sickles might have visited the Boggs home and plundered it, perhaps even burned it.

It turned out that the arrival of the "Liberty Boys" at the Boggs' home was most opportune.

Sam Sickles and his gang had appeared at the house, had taken everything of value that they could find, and then had set fire to the house.

They were standing in the front yard, watching the fire, which was just getting fairly started when the "Liberty Boys" put in an appearance.

In their midst, a prisoner, was Mr. Boggs, and Sickles had told the patriot that as soon as the house was burned down they would hang him.

"We air heer fur blood this time," he said fiercely, "an' theer hain't no Dick Slater ter interfere an' save yer rebel neck frum ther noose."

At this instant one of his men caught sight of the "Liberty Boys," and gave vent to a warning cry, and started to run.

The others did the same, but had gone but a few yards when there came a volley from the muskets of the youths, and every Tory in the gang went down, either dead or wounded.

Those who were wounded were so seriously hurt that they died in a few minutes, so it was a clean sweep.

"They were heartless scoundrels," said Dick, "and deserved death if ever men did. They have been plundering, burning, and in some cases murdering the patriots

this neighborhood, and it will be a mighty good thing to have it known that they will never bother the people again."

"You have saved my life again, Mr. Slater," said Mr. Boggs, a look of pleasure and gratitude on his face. "I am sure I shall never be able to repay you for what you have done for me."

"We will call it square, Mr. Boggs, if you will give my boys their supper," said Dick smilingly.

"I shall be only too glad to do that," with an answering smile, "but that will be a very long way from making even."

"I don't think so, sir; you must remember that myself and men are patriot soldiers, and that it is our duty to render aid to patriots wherever found in danger."

While Mrs. Boggs and Lucy were cooking supper for the "Liberty Boys," the youths buried the dead Tories, and when this had been finished, Dick said to Mr. Boggs:

"There; now you may go to sleep to-night, with the assurance that you will not wake up and find yourself in the hands of Sickles and his gang."

The fire, which had not gained much headway when the "Liberty Boys" first appeared, was extinguished without difficulty, a recent rain having dampened the logs and made the fire slow in getting under headway.

While they were eating supper Dick explained that they were following the retreating British army, for the purpose of protecting the patriot families along the route taken by the redcoats.

"Then the British were driven away from Charleston?" exclaimed Mr. Boggs.

"Yes," and Dick told the story of the encounter with the British.

The patriot settler was earnest in his expressions of delight at the success of the patriots in driving the British back out of South Carolina.

"Let them go back to Savannah, where they belong," he said. "Perhaps this will teach them a lesson."

"I hope so," said Dick.

After the meal was ended, Dick and Bob mounted their horses and rode away on a scouting expedition. They wished to see where the redcoats had encamped, and also

to learn whether or not any foraging parties had been sent out.

They were not long in finding the encampment, and they were just in time to see a foraging party set out.

They watched till they saw which way the party was headed, and then Bob hastened back to Mr. Boggs' house to bring the "Liberty Boys."

He was soon back to the point where Dick was awaiting their coming, and they set out after the party of redcoats. They overtook the party where it had paused at the home of a patriot, and they made a sudden attack, succeeding in killing a dozen or more. The rest rode away in haste, and lost no time in getting back to the British encampment, where they told a wonderful story of how they had been attacked by an army and put to flight.

The "Liberty Boys" followed the British army clear to the Savannah River, which marks the boundary between South Carolina and Georgia, and they struck a number of foraging parties severe blows.

Prevost, the British general, made several attempts to entrap the youths, but to no avail. They were too smart for him, and when they returned to Charleston they were enabled to render a good account of themselves to the patriot general.

THE END.

The next number (92) of "The Liberty Boys of '76" will contain "THE LIBERTY BOYS 'TREED'; OR, WARM WORK IN THE TALL TIMBER," by Harry Moore.

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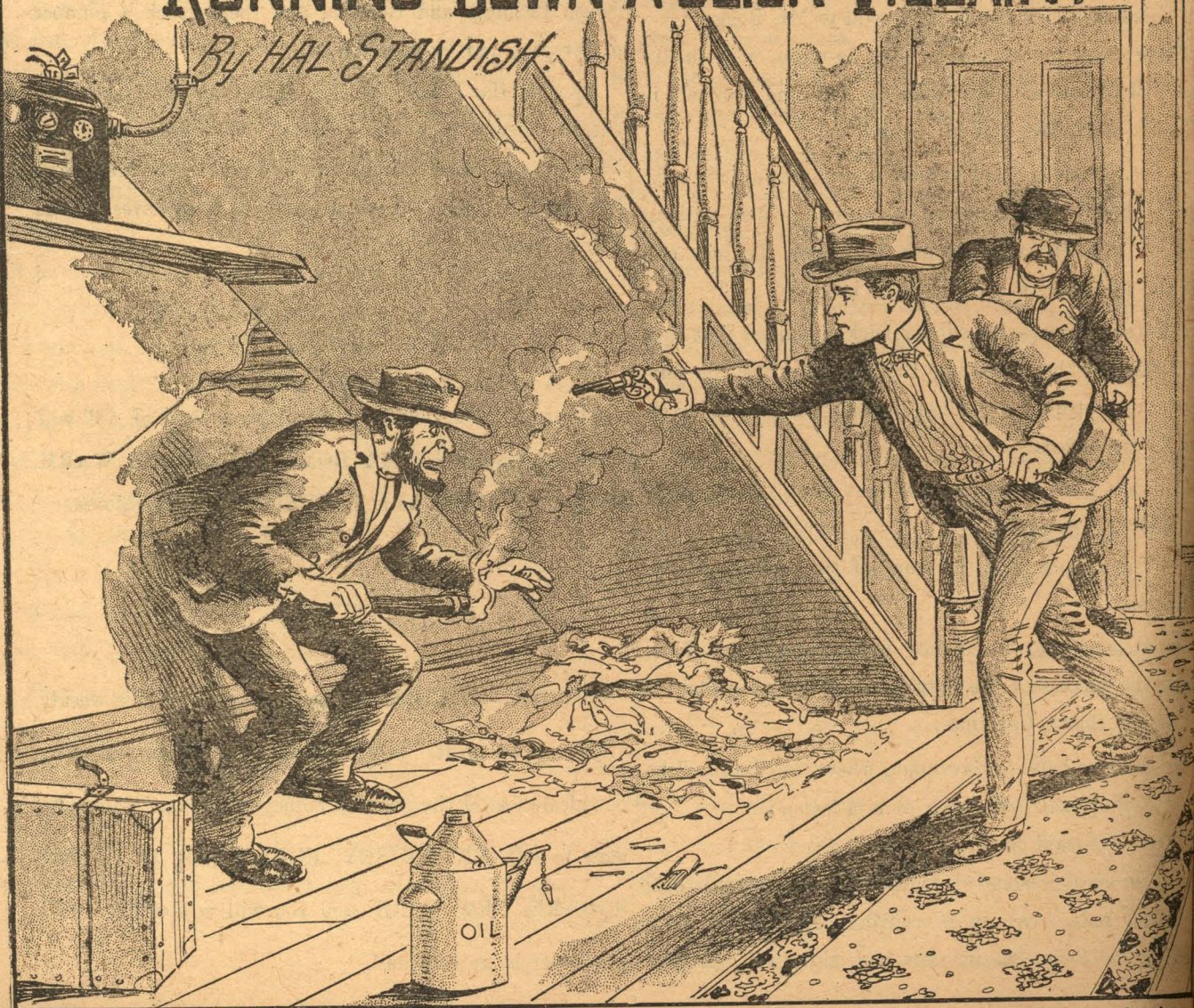
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